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I will kill you all.

LINK VS SAMUS

Zelda or *Metroid*? That's the question that's been ringing around **NGC** Towers this month. Well, that and "who's making the tea?" (It's inevitably Jud, if you're interested.)

But it's been so terribly difficult to decide which game is better. They're both magnificent fun, and probably among the best games we've *ever* played. And yet, they're not without flaws. *Metroid* has perhaps too much reliance on scanning; *Zelda* is in some ways too reminiscent of *Ocarina of Time*, and sailing across an ocean can get tiresome when you do it for the tenth time.

Nonetheless, they are both very different but equally engrossing games. Which is why, ultimately, they've both got the same score. You can be sure that no matter which you get, you're buying into an astonishing experience. And that's really what matters, isn't it?

TAKE IT E3

E3 rolls around again next month. If you didn't know, it's an annual videogame trade show, where everyone who's anyone shows off their wares for the coming year. Mr Kitts is risking deep vein thrombosis and jetting out to represent **NGC**. And next issue, you can be sure of the biggest and best coverage from Los Angeles. With a huge number of new games being unveiled for the first time – including *Rogue Squadron III*, *Mario 128* and the hugely anticipated *Mario Kart* – the year ahead looks like its going to be a massively exciting one for Gamecube. And, of course, there will undoubtedly be a few surprises, but we'll have to wait and see. Early word has it that Nintendo will be concentrating mainly on third-party support. But wasn't 'The Nintendo Difference' supposed to be all about first-party games? See you next month!

Jes Bickham
Editor
ngc@futurenet.co.uk

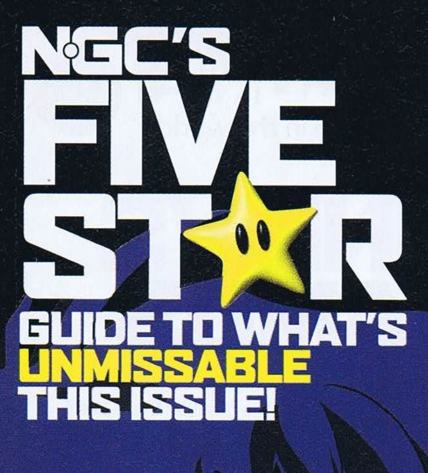
TURN OVER THE PAGE!
For five of the best things in this Matrix-tastic issue of ***NGC****!*

TURN TO PAGE 26
For the first Cube review of *Enter The Matrix*…

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Go to page 110, where for a small amount of cash you can get three free issues and a free joypad. No excuses!

THE UK'S BIGGEST UNOFFICIAL GAMECUBE MAG! DON'T MISS! N·GC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING SPLINTER CELL Share the stealth! Move over Metal Gear – this one's got it all! ZELDA WIND WAKER Brain-filling ten-page review and giant tips guide! EXCLUSIVE! ENTER THE MATRIX TAKE THE RED PILL! The first Gamecube review you'll read anywhere! MARIO KART! PREPARE TO BE AMAZED – FIRST SHOTS INSIDE! POKÉMON THEY'RE BACK! WE TAKE RUBY AND SAPPHIRE FOR A SPIN INSIDE. SOUL CALIBUR II BLIMEY! Is this the best beat-'em-up ever? Only NGC holds the answer!

WHAT'S IN THE MAG?





ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER

Set sail for adventure, me hearties!





ENTER THE MATRIX

The One? Or just a Half?





LEGEND OF ZELDA THE WIND WAKER

PAGE 30



LINK UNLEASHED…

His greatest adventure to date? The best thing on Gamecube? Ten packed pages of analysis start right here, and the complete dungeon walkthrough begins on page 86.

MEET ENJiKi

Well, hello baby. Apart from looking rather better in a crop-top than our previous mascot, Worldy Bloke (who was fired after drunkenly disgracing himself at a corporate function), Enjiki serves the highly useful function of rating your jokes. Turn to page 108 for further details.







SPLINTER CELL

Clancy said we should force a Lady to review his new game. So we did!

SKIES OF ARCADIA

Sega's airborne RPG, dissected by Superfan.



WIN! £3000 & OUR OLD TAT!

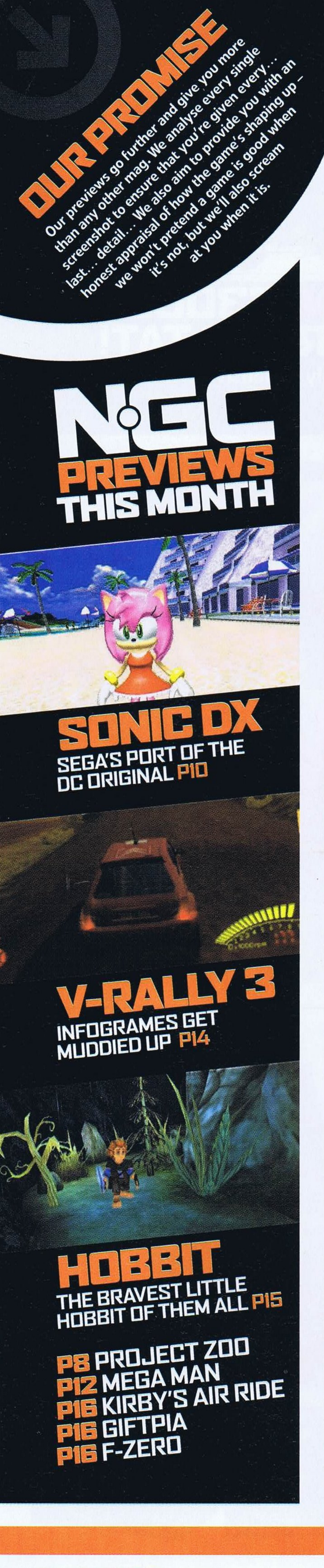
Seriously expensive prizes on offer!













△ Taking a grenade launcher and using it indoors isn't exactly safe. But what the heck, eh? It's only a videogame. ONLY A VIDEOGAME.



△ They call it GEO MOD! That they do.



△ Nasty gunship problem here. Yes.



△ Shoot the prancing fool dead. DEAD.

RED FACTION 2

It's a tough old life when you're a nanotechnologically-enhanced super-soldier. What a big word we just did!



The original *Red Faction* was, to be frank, a bit of an underwhelming mess. Its trump card, the much-anticipated Geo-Mod engine, was a let-down – the gimmick was that explosive weapons could literally knock holes through walls, so allowing you to create your own paths through the game. Unfortunately, it really *was* a gimmick, adding little to the experience. You could only blow down certain walls, and only go where the game wanted you to go, making the whole experience ultimately pretty much like any other first-person shooter.

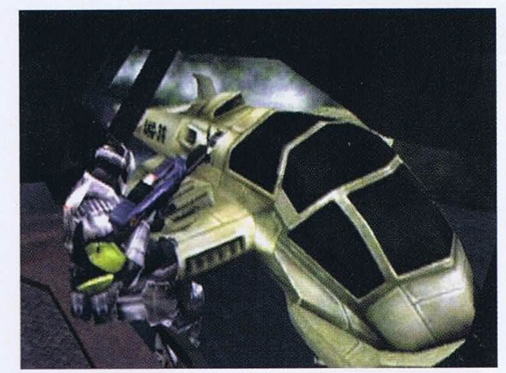
Red Faction 2, originally released months ago on PlayStation 2, is much improved. And the preview code we played this month points to it being a solid and entertaining experience. Geo-Mod is still here, but less trumpeted as The Next Big Thing, and now more suited as a handy strategy to use in a pinch. For instance, the first level sees you breaking into an enemy installation – by blowing a hole in the outer wall. Now that the mechanic is more directed in its application, and not

> **"THE GOVERNMENT HAS BETRAYED YOU SO IT'S TIME TO, ER, KICK ASS, OR SOMETHING"**



DID YOU KNOW? "Geo-Mod supports the real-time, arbitrary modification of the geometry that makes up a game's environment", according to THQ. Wow!

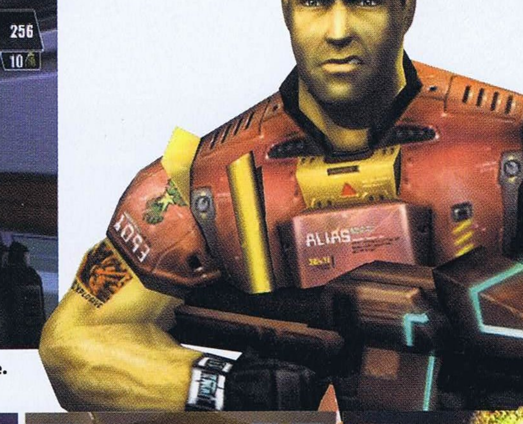
Red her up, and shoot some holes in walls



△ A bit of introductory FMV for you. A bit like *Halo*.



△ Both guns are fired by the shoulder triggers. Nice.

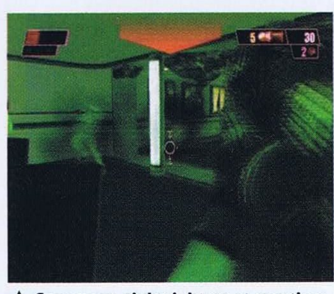


GEO MOD!

Blow holes in walls with heavy-duty ordnance! That's the beauty of Red Faction 2. Unfortunately, it's still a bit of a gimmick, but don't take it too seriously and you'll appreciate the spectacle rather than be disappointed by the lack of innovation on display.







△ Snap your nightsight on at any time.



△ Yet more crazy grenade action. Your team-mates act independently of you. Clever.

pretending to be something else, it feels a lot more comfortable.

Elsewhere, things look promising. The well-fleshed-out future setting might not be supported by a hugely involving narrative – your government has betrayed you and it's time to, er, kick ass, or something – but there's loads of detail here. And developers Volition have tried to cram in as many ideas as possible. Indeed, it's obvious that the game owes something to *Halo* on the Xbox, when it comes to such things as your computer-controlled team-mates and the plentiful one-liners and speech from supporting characters (along with the ability to drive vehicles). There's a nice line in sardonic humour too and, as Martin has noted in these pages before, there's a definite influence from the films of Paul Verhoeven, with satirical news items and the like buttressing all the shooting bits. The first half of the game even sees you assaulting a TV station to avenge yourself on the dictator that dropped you in it.

With nice touches, such as civilians to avoid and an attendant end-of-level Heroic rating – based on how many people you manage *not* to kill – as well as a healthy spread of near-future weapons, this is certainly shaping up to be a promising little number. We gave the four-player multiplayer mode a good going over too, and can report that it moves smoothly and offers a more varied and involving take on social shooting than, say, *Nightfire* or (heavens above) *Turok Evolution*.

Only time, and rigorous testing, will tell us if *Red Faction 2* is encroaching on Star Game territory. Review next month!

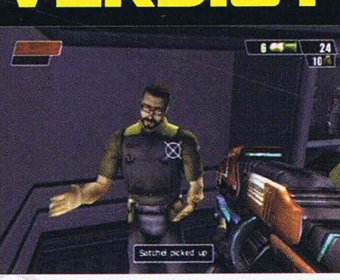
DRIVE BY



You'll get to go driving in *Red Faction 2*, as certain levels see you taking control of vehicles, from subs to bipedal battlesuits. You'll also get to do some on-rails shooting. Early in the game you'll find yourself in the belly of a gunship, blowing out office block windows, whizzing between skyscrapers and dodging enemy 'copters. It's a nice change of pace, even if it goes on a bit.

NGC VERDICT

While this was well-received on PS2, we're less sure about it. It's perfectly competent and immersing, with tons of detail and a real feeling of being in a world with a thought-out society and history. But at heart it's a pretty basic FPS and in the light of *Metroid* (yeah, we know it's not 'really' an FPS) is that really enough? Hmmm...

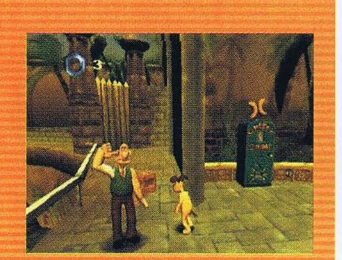


UK	US	JAPAN
JUNE	OUT NOW	TBA

ANTICIPATION RATING







THE KNOWLEDGE

- Based around Aardman Animation's most famous creation.
- First game in history to be targeted exclusively at trifle-dribbling grandparents.
- Control the dog (Gromit) and leap about saving animals from an army of penguins, who have formed a deadly alliance with monkeys. That's right. Monkeys.
- Failure to succeed in the game will see both Wallace and Gromit horribly recycled inside the Play-Doh Fun Factory. Well, maybe.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Bam

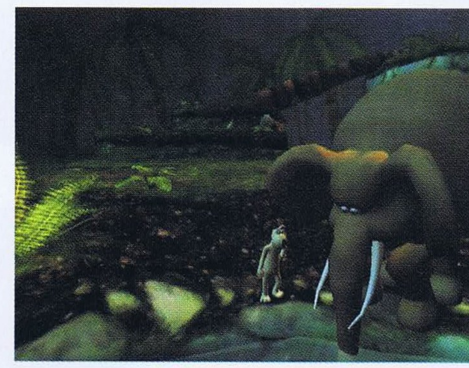
What have they done before?
Reign of Fire (NGC/76) 59%
Save humans from dragons or vice versa, in this rather average film tie-in.



△ No game could possibly be complete without robotic dog-bothering penguins. None.



△ Find any interesting trinkets and the elastic-faced Wallace will turn them into useful inventions.



△ The world is broken up into differently themed areas. Elephants in the jungle, polar bears in the icy bits, etc.

WALLACE & GROMIT PROJECT ZOO

The serial cheese-munchers and sheep-terrorists are all set to debut on Gamecube…

It had to happen eventually. Everyone's 'favourite' cheese-obsessed gurning Wigan-residing dimwit and his long-suffering pet have finally made their way to Gamecube.

Naturally, the game's premise is suitably ridiculous. Feathers McGraw, the villainous penguin from The Wrong Trousers has taken over the zoo in which he was formerly imprisoned. It's up to Wallace and Gromit to free the zoo animals and restore order to the place.

Platforming is the order of the day here (bet you couldn't see *that* one coming). You'll be taking control of Gromit the dog to traverse a number off differently themed levels, from jungle-like areas to cavernous mines and icy regions.

Wallace is your CPU-controlled partner who, at various intervals through your adventure, conjours up different inventions to help you on your quest. These inventions come about through your retrieving of different items, such as nuts and bolts. Give them to Wallace and he'll knock you up a banana gun, a turnip launcher, springy shoes for reaching higher ground, and the good Lord only knows what else.

While the jury is still out as regards how the game plays, one thing is certain: Bam have done a commendable job digitising the duo. They're both beautifully animated, as you'd expect – with Gromit in particular displaying a pleasing amount of moves and animations as he jumps around the dynamically lit game world.

It wouldn't be honest if we said we we're expecting truly epic things from *Wallace and Gromit*, but we're quietly impressed so far.

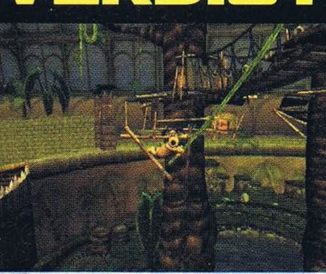
> "THE EVIL PENGUIN FROM THE WRONG TROUSERS HAS TAKEN OVER THE ZOO IN WHICH HE WAS FORMERLY IMPRISONED"



△ Gromit: created using old, recycled bits of Morph. Fact!



NGC VERDICT



It's safe to say this looks and moves very well indeed. The lighting in particular is worthy of praise, while the animation on the character models will undoubtedly do justice to the series.

The addition of wide-ranging and varied inventions is also another area of interest, as are the rather sizeable and well-designed levels. We'll have more as we get it…

UK OCTOBER | US TBA | JAPAN TBA



ANTICIPATION RATING








1 2 3 4 5



DID YOU KNOW? When Nick Park came up with the idea for the duo, Gromit was originally a cat. He was then turned into a dog for Grand Day Out as the shape was easier to work with.



Baldur's Gate™ Dark Alliance™

Live the Fantasy...

"Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance looks like an absolute must-have game..."
- GameSpy.com




Explosive spell effects


Hordes of D&D® creatures











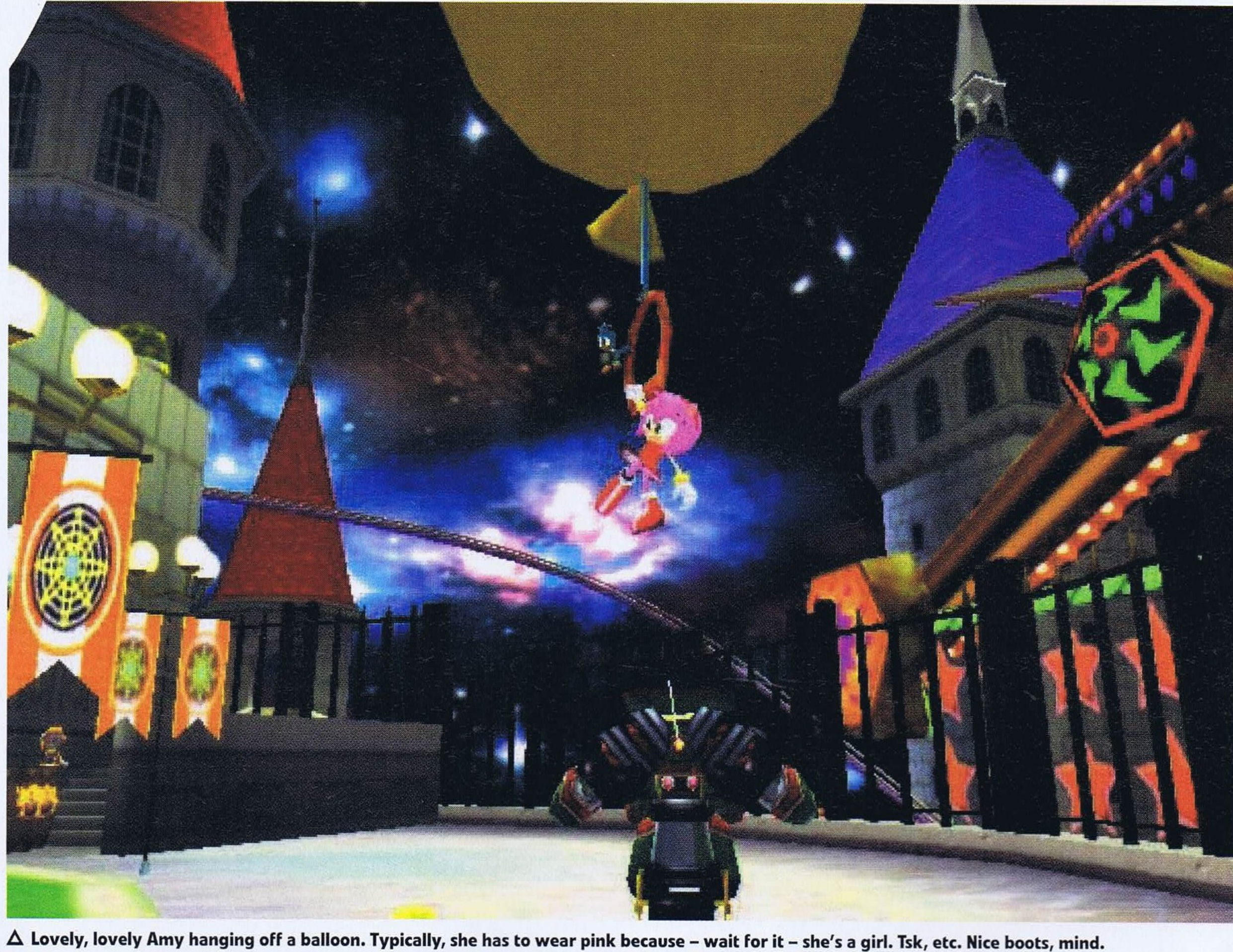


PlayStation®2

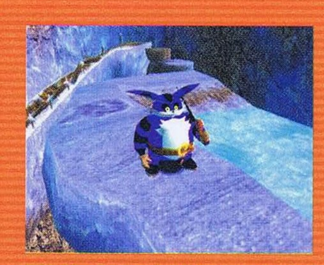








△ Lovely, lovely Amy hanging off a balloon. Typically, she has to wear pink because – wait for it – she's a girl. Tsk, etc. Nice boots, mind.



THE KNOWLEDGE

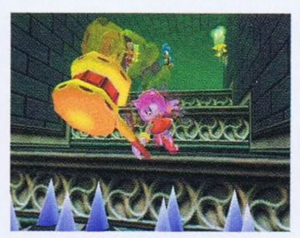
- An improved port of the Dreamcast launch game, which was well-received back in 1853.
- Six different characters to choose from, each of whom plays in a slightly different adventure with unique abilities: Sonic, Tails, Knuckles, Amy, Big the Cat and Gosen-type droid E-102.
- Incorporates a load of Cube-specific extras; the treasure hunt Mission Mode and no less than 12 unlockable Game Gear games! By golly gosh.



FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Sega

What have they done before?
Sonic Adventure 2 Battle (NGC/67, 70%)
Another Dreamcast port, and a slightly underwhelming game.





△ The game is sharp and colourful, if a little primitive next to the likes of *Mario Sunshine*. But there's plenty to see and do, which is the main thing.





△ The majority of the levels involve running very fast indeed. They're a rush alright, but there's precious little skill involved.

SONIC ADVENTURE

It's the first *Sonic Adventure*, transported into the present by the miracle of technology. Witchcraft!



As Jeff Goldblum once so wisely said, "you must go faster". Then again, he also turned a baboon inside-out in The Fly, so it may be best not to trust him entirely.

But we digress. That little phrase sums up *Sonic Adventure* perfectly, as the little blue hedgehog is all about the speed – and always has been. This brand new turbocharging of a much-loved Dreamcast original is no different, even if it does contain free-roaming 'Adventure Fields'.

But why should you care about a four-year-old Dreamcast launch game, when you're busy rubbing the pure gameplay goodness of a brand-new *Zelda* all over your tubby little body? Admittedly, *Sonic* is an acquired taste, and the Gamecube port of *Sonic Adventure 2 Battle* didn't exactly have us in fits of rapture (and no, we still don't like the music). But this *Sonic* is commonly held to be a superior exercise than its sequel and Sega really have given the game a complete overhaul, with a frankly mind-boggling amount of extras to keep you entertained.

The main game itself isn't short of substance, mind. While hurtling along at toupee-ripping speeds means that *Sonic Adventure* sometimes plays like it's on rails, the six playable characters mean there's plenty of playtime. Seeing as each have different abilities, the

ACTION!



It's not all run-as-fast-as-you-can, you know. In between cheek-flapping speed, there are the *Mario*-like Adventure Fields. These are hub-type areas ripe for exploration, which incorporate items you've got to find to get certain abilities. It's a curious mix of the sedate and the frantic.

DID YOU KNOW? Hedgehogs lick unfamiliar objects until a thick saliva forms, which they then rub onto their skin and spines. Foolish animals.

Retro racing with the blue road hog

SEGA-SATIONAL! Once Nintendo's greatest nemesis, Sega are now key developers on the Gamecube. Good on 'em.

△ Big the Cat is a big cat. His special skill means he can go fishing, bigly. Not quite as exciting as flying, is it?

△ The sheer speed is exhilarating, but at the cost of control.



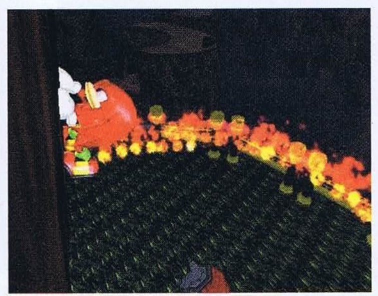
△ Cute. If you think strangely anthropomorphised animals are cute.



△ Good old Ed. Take Gosen's flesh-mask off, and this is what he looks like, y'know.



△ Ed can use his jetpack, which is just as well as he plods around ever-so-slowly. But then, robots aren't built for speed. Apart from the Raston Robot from Dr Who. But that was rubbish.



△ Knuckles is probably the most fun character. He can fly and climb vertically.



△ Tails has the most irritating voice. He does, however, have three tails. Lucky thing.

DX DIRECTOR'S CUT

game is fundamentally altered each time you play through it.

But it's the extras that make up the real meat of this 'director's cut'. For instance, the Mission mode is basically a treasure hunt. There are over 50 missions to be enjoyed, each of which takes place in the different Adventure Fields. They take the form of collecting, destroying objects and also entering areas with a specified amount of coins – among many other activities. A neat little addition, to be sure.

> **"BUT IT'S THE EXTRAS THAT MAKE UP THE REAL MEAT OF THIS 'DIRECTOR'S CUT'"**

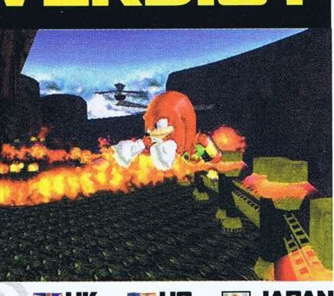
But there's a more compelling reason to look forward to *Sonic Adventure DX*, and that's the 12 Sega Game Gear games you can unlock. Rather than let them fade into obscurity, since the Game Boy killed the Game Gear off, Sega have had a fit of *Sonic Mega Collection*-style generosity, so everything from the original portable *Sonic the Hedgehog* to *Tails Adventure* is here. It's a mind-bending experience!

There's also a GBA link-up mode and plenty of sub-Pokémon Chao business to indulge in, making this, at the very least, a Sonic completist's dream. There's a huge amount of dusty gaming bric-a-brac packed in here, and even if the code we played this month wasn't as polished as we'd hoped, this is something to look forward to, offering, as it does, pleasing visual enhancements on top of everything else.

The fact remains, however, that the game itself was never the most accomplished title – a little restrictive and shallow, gameplay-wise. Nevertheless, despite its faults, this is still highly entertaining fare, even if we can't convince the more diehard cynics of the office – mentioning no names, Kittsy – of this. Expect a review next month!



This plainly needs a lot of work. The game's all 'there', but it's in dire need of optimisation. It's hugely jerky at the moment, and the camera seems to be worse than in the Dreamcast version, lagging behind you and struggling to keep up. Whether you like Sonic or not is a different matter, but this could be great if these issues are sorted out.



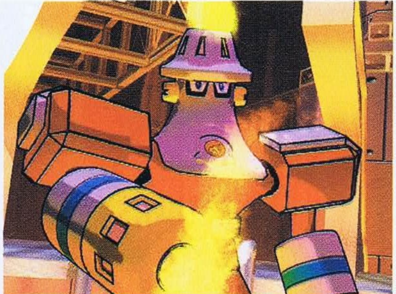
UK JUNE | US JUNE | JAPAN JUNE

ANTICIPATION RATING







△ The first boss. Surprisingly, he's rock hard.



△ Jump on spikes for some insto-death action.



△ These 2D platfoming sections are in the 'net'.



THE KNOWLEDGE

- GC update of the rather nice RPG-style games on GBA, using that highly original visual technique that the experts call cel shading.
- Take control of two characters: schoolkid Lan (who participates in the adventure sections of the game), and Lan's virtual buddy Mega Man (who takes up the reigns on the more action-orientated sections).
- Trade and collect Battle Chips, which can be used to power up Mega Man by bestowing him with unique skills.



△ Mega Man has a number of different attacks and defence moves…



△ … these can be used by picking out battle chips, like cards from a deck.



FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Capcom

What have they done before?
Resident Evil Zero (NGC/78, 85%)
Brrraainnnsss. BraAAIIINNssss!

MEGA MAN
NETWORK TRANSMISSION

Capcom show a different shade of blue in this odd GBA sequel.





△ Action takes on a tactical element as you choose your attacks.

The premise is a little strange for a *Mega Man* game, as it moves away from the game's usual action-platformer roots on the Game Boy. Instead, in *Mega Man Network Transmission* you control a kid called Lan who (although he lives in the 'real world'), has a little PDA call a PET in which Mega Man, erm… lives.

Back in the real world you go around in an RPG-style town, merrily chatting to the inhabitants and progressing the story. This revolves around an internet-based bad guy who is corrupting the world's computers by uploading viruses, and the like, to perform his evil deeds.

That's where Mega Man comes in. You 'upload' him into virus-riddled computers (essentially the game's dungeons) and he dispatches the baddies found inside. Well, you do. The game has a rather nice strategic element, involving chips that can be collected to give Mega Man extra abilities to use in combat. You can only take a set amount into the NET with you, so it's basically a bit like any card-based battle game.

The original Game Boy *Mega Man* games were actually very entertaining titles, and a little underrated in our opinion. But whether the franchise will work as well on GC is another matter entirely.



> "YOU CONTROL A KID CALLED LAN WHO HAS A LITTLE PDA IN WHICH MEGA MAN, ER... LIVES"

NGC VERDICT

To be honest, this isn't looking that hot. We enjoyed the GBA original a great deal, mainly because there were some nice ideas in there, especially the chip-trading feature and the excellent action-strategy nature of the battles. This system isn't in this GC update of the game, which uses a rather mediocre 2D platforming approach. Hmm.



UK JUNE | US JUNE | JAPAN JUNE

ANTICIPATION RATING






1 2 3 4 5

DID YOU KNOW? Old Megs has a venerable gaming history indeed – 1987's *Mega Man* was his first game. He has gone on to appear, to our knowledge, in 64 titles since then. Prolific, no?

I LIKE DRIVING IN MY CAR!

...it isn't quite a rally star. Well, who cares about that when we've got our filthy paws on playable code of the latest *V-Rally* instalment. There may be tons of racers on GC now, but this is the only one where you start off in... an office! Intriguing...



THE KNOWLEDGE

- Drive a collection of real world cars around some of the world's toughest courses. Many of which will be covered in filth and lined with badly animated cardboard cutouts we like to call 'people'.
- Embroil yourself in the seedy underworld of rally team contracts and spend hours tinkering with numerous set-up menus, while deluding yourself that you really do 'know what you're doing'.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Eden Studios

What have they done before?
A whole truckload of different *V-Rallys* on lots of different platforms (NGC/Never)
Mud, rain, cars, rain and mud.





△ Many teams will try and tempt you to join them via emails to your office.



△ In order to start racing you have to pass tests from different teams.

V-RALLY 3

It's mud versus machine in Infogrames' detailed rally sim.

Slowly but surely, we're getting more and more racers for Gamecube. This time it's the turn of *V-Rally 3*, a port of the reasonably respectable series on PlayStation. Unlike the recently reviewed, and perfectly enjoyable, Acclaim rally-racer *Dakar 2*, *V-Rally 3* takes more of a simulation approach to the proceedings. And there is a substantial front end, and host of options, to absorb into your overworked brain-system.

Starting off in an office (that's right, an *office*), you answer emails asking you to take various motors from different teams on a test drive. Prove your worth, and you'll be able to sign a contract to embark on a lengthy season.

After the extended process of tinkering with your car's settings, it's the usual time-trial runs through twisting country roads; battling against various degrees of nasty weather to get to your destination as quickly, and with as little damage to your motor, as possible.

Unlike *Dakar*'s simple and robust arcade handing, *V-Rally*'s motors are much tougher to come to terms with, and require more sensitivity and skill if you're to be successful.

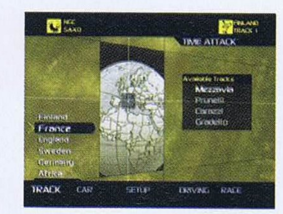
The visuals aren't too bad. Not brilliant – there are still some juddery frame-rate issues – but we expect them to be sorted out by the time the review code comes in.

So far so good, then – it'll be nice to have a properly 'serious' racer to get to grips with.

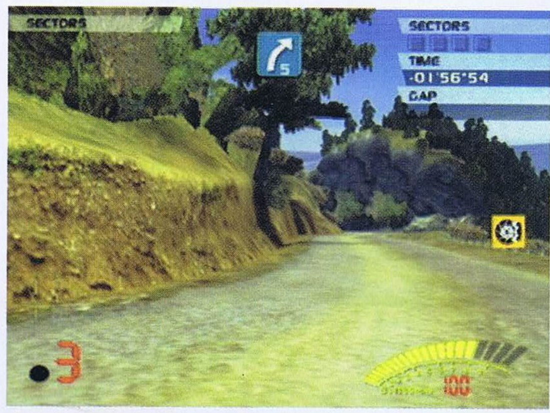
Review next month.



△ There are plenty of car settings to tinker with and...



△ ... a healthy selection of tracks to race across.



△ Unfortunately, the cornering seems too twitchy for our tastes.



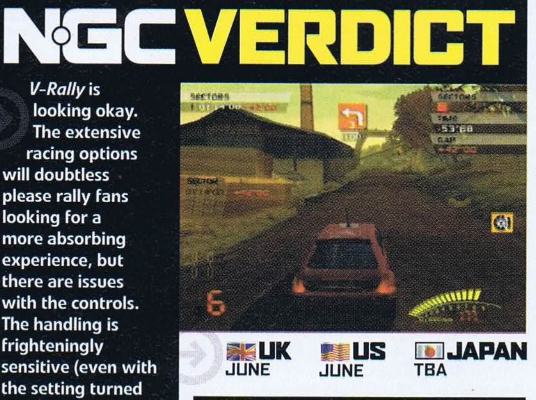
△ Look at all that mud. It's almost like earth, mixed with water.





NGC VERDICT

V-Rally is looking okay. The extensive racing options will doubtless please rally fans looking for a more absorbing experience, but there are issues with the controls. The handling is frighteningly sensitive (even with the setting turned right down) and the slightest collision sends you spinning. In its current form it's not much fun.



UK JUNE | US JUNE | JAPAN TBA

ANTICIPATION RATING

1 2 **3** 4 5



△ Expect the game to follow the text very closely, but with some added...



△ ...environments and scenarios to lengthen the experience somewhat.



△ Bilbo's stumpy dwarf friends. When Bilbo falls asleep, their beards, enchanted by Gandalf's superior growth, croon with some surprisingly melodic close-harmony singing. No, really.





△ The controls are quite simple. Bilbo, for example, only has the one attack button.



△ The environments are all rather lovely, especially in sunset... which, um, you can't see here.



△ Exploration, puzzle solving, battling and platforming are the order of the day here.



△ Hooray! A mine cart level! Expect plenty of original touches like this... er, hang on a minute...

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING HANDS-ON PLAYTEST

THE HOBBIT

Return of the ring-midget! You know what we're Tolkien about.

THE KNOWLEDGE

- Take control of Bilbo Baggins and explore Middle Earth on your quest to defeat Smaug the Dragon.
- Taken from the JRR Tolkien fantasy novel of the same name.
- *Zelda*-style adventuring gameplay with combat and puzzle-solving across familiar scenarios (as well as new ones, endorsed by the Tolkien estate).
- Lovely cartoony textures and character models.



FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Inevitable Studios

What have they done before?
Tribes: Aerial Assault
Team-based FPS action for PS2, which is, to be perfectly honest, not too great...



Following the story that precedes *The Lord of the Rings* is *The Hobbit* – the game of the book, of the same name, by JRR Tolkien.

The story follows Bilbo Baggins (uncle of ring-bearer Frodo and all-round thieving, hairy-footed midget) as he sets off to kill Smaug the Dragon, with a bunch of dwarves (fatter, axe-wielding midgets with beards), and steal his treasure.

Unlike the repetitive *LOTR* game from EA, Vivendi's Tolkien effort takes a much more *Zelda*-like approach. Taking control of Bilbo, you have to traverse some (rather nicely) detailed worlds. You have to complete tasks, solve puzzles and leap across the mandatory platforming sections, whilst fending off enemies with a sword named after ex-Police frontman Sting.

Just like in *Zelda, The Hobbit* employs the lock-on system to keep you facing opponents like goblins, spiders and other vicious wildlife. And your inventory can be quickly accessed by using the D-pad – in much the same way as you use the C-stick in *Wind Waker*.

Bilbo also has a number of other handy skills. He can use his staff to pole-vault across chasms, pick up and throw rocks at enemies, and he has the ability to sneak about in the more stealthy sections of the game. Of course, he can also use the power of the ring to turn himself invisible, for a limited period of time.

One of the most encouraging aspects of the game is that it follows the course of the book pretty much perfectly, and there are only a couple of non-book related levels, scenarios and diversions to flesh out the experience a bit more.

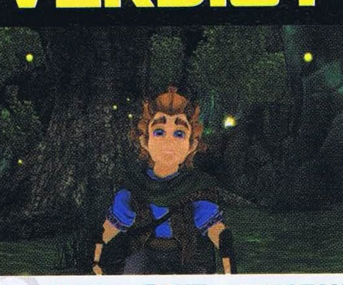


NGC VERDICT

All in all, it's not looking too shabby. The atmosphere of the title is nicely established through some lovely cut-scenes, while the levels all do a grand job in recreating the feeling that you're trotting barefoot around Middle Earth.

Unlike in the book, however, your companions don't make much of an appearance. Instead, it's all focused on Bilbo Baggins himself.

Granted, the gameplay does trample some rather familiar ground, but so far *The Hobbit* seems to offer some good solid adventuring...



UK SEPT | US SEPT | JAPAN TBA

WHAT WE WANT TO SEE INCLUDED

- Some nice innovative puzzles. We don't want any of that get-stone-A-and-place-in-hole-B-to-open-door-C stuff. That would be rubbish.
- Minigames where you get to hang Hobbits up by their stupid curly hair and flog their ugly hairy feet – until their soles bleed.

ANTICIPATION RATING






"The story is fairly sane by Skip's standards"









GIFTPIA

The perils of having an extended lie-in, and other RPG strangeness…

NGC SPELLING MISTAKE

We think the game's title is actually supposed to be Giftopia, but they've gone and spelt it without the O on all their artwork.

では マッポくん
例のものを
よろしくな〜のだ！


What on earth is this all about then? From esoteric RPG specialists Skip, and published by Nintendo, *Giftpia* is most accurately summarised by its own tagline: Alternative.

As for exactly what the gameplay involves, we should have a better idea by the time you read this, as *Giftpia* will be available on import (it's still a few days from release as we write).

The story is fairly sane by Skip's standards – you play a boy who misses his coming-of-age ceremony, and is doomed to remain a child unless he can find a way to restage the entire event.

Skip employees have previously worked on such delights as *Moon: Remix RPG Adventure*, in which the main character gets sucked into a computer game, replacing a 'hero' who's actually despised by all and sundry in the virtual world.

Giftpia team members' CVs include *Super Mario RPG* and *Chrono Trigger*, which are among the few things they've made that have been redone in English. Hopefully this one will make it outside of Japan, too.





KIRBY'S AIR RIDE

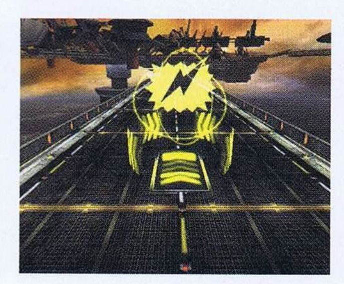


We'll be at the E3 show as you read these very words, seeing just how good (or otherwise) we can expect this resurrected N64 reworking to be. So until next month, here are a couple of interesting new pics showing the game's split-screen four-player mode in action, which is something that should tide us over until *Mario Kart* is released. All will be revealed rather soonish.









F-ZERO

The release date for Sega's impressive take on the old *F-Zero* concept keeps slipping, just by the odd few weeks, on a fairly regular basis. This is probably a good thing in this case, since early playtesting of the arcade version has enabled the coders to get important feedback about exactly how an *F-Zero* title should work on a console. And it's as far from pale imitations such as *Wipeout* as you're likely to get.

While further slippages are not out of the question, we can confidently expect to see both the US and Japanese versions well before the summer is out, followed by a European release at a later, unspecified date. Better make it before Christmas, Nintendo!

ULTRA RELEASE LIST

The latest on every Cube game in development – updated monthly!

What a lot of games! This is pretty much everything that's been officially announced, and everything else we've sneaked a look at during our unauthorised excursions beyond mysterious locked doors at various software developers. In other words, breaking and entering. Expect more gaming and thievery in next month's post-E3 edition.

JUNE

Battlebots	THQ
Black & Bruised	Vivendi
Dragon's Lair 3D	THQ
F1 Career Challenge	EA
Futurama	SCi
Galidor	Lego
Hitman 2	Eidos
ISS 3	Konami
Lotus Challenge	Virgin
P.N.03	Capcom
Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft
V-Rally 3	Infogrames

JULY/SUMMER

D&D Heroes	Infogrames
Gladius	LucasArts
Hulk	Vivendi
The Italian Job	Eidos
Jacked	3DO
Lego Drome Racers	EA
Mace Griffin	Vivendi
Street Racing Syndicate	3DO
Tube Slider	NEC
Viewtiful Joe	Capcom
WWE X9	THQ

3RD QUARTER

Alias	Acclaim
Bionicle	Lego
Bulletproof Monk	Empire
Charlie's Angels	Ubi Soft
Freestyle Metal X	Midway
MoH Rising Sun	EA
NBA Jam 2004	Acclaim
Pitfall Harry	Activision
Raven Shield	Ubi Soft
Robocop	Virgin
Soul Calibur 2	Nintendo
Spy Hunter 2	Midway
Starsky & Hutch	Empire
Tiger Woods 2004	EA
Wallace & Gromit	BAM
Wario World	Nintendo
XIII	Ubi Soft

4TH QUARTER

Bad Boys II	Empire
FIFA 2004	EA
Final Fantasy	Square
Goblin Commander	Jaleco
Harvest Moon	Ubi Soft
The Hobbit	Vivendi
Killer 7	Capcom
The Last Ninja	Studio 3
Power Rangers	THQ
Rugby 2004	EA
Starcraft: Ghost	Vivendi
Teenage MN Turtles	Konami

TBA

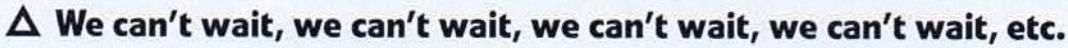
1080° Avalanche	Nintendo
Animal Crossing 2	Nintendo
Backyard Football	Infogrames
Billy Hatcher	Sega
Broken Sword	THQ
Crank the Weasel	Midway
Cubix Showdown	3DO
Dead Phoenix	Capcom
Donkey Kong	Nintendo
F-Zero GC	Nintendo
Full Throttle II	LucasArts
Game Zero	Nintendo
Giftpia	Nintendo
Gladiator	Midway
The Great Escape	SCi
Hitman 3	Eidos
I, Gladiator	Acclaim
James Bond Game	EA
Kirby's Air Ride	Nintendo
Looney Tunes	EA
Mario 128	Nintendo
Mario Golf	Nintendo
Mario Kart	Nintendo
Mario Tennis	Nintendo
Metal Gear Solid 3	Konami
Metroid Prime 2	Nintendo
The Movies	Activision
Nightmare Creatures	Ubi Soft
Nitro City	Midway
Pikmin 2	Nintendo
Pillage	Zed Two
Project BG&E	Ubi Soft
Rayman Arena	Ubi Soft
Resident Evil 4	Capcom
Rogue Squadron III	LucasArts
Roll-o-Rama	Nintendo
Starfox Armada	Nintendo
Stung	TBA
Tak Power of JuJu	THQ
True Crime LA	Activision
Unity	EA/Lionhead
Urban Freestyle	Acclaim
XGRA	Acclaim



OUR PROMISE
We've spent years securing the biggest and best contacts inside the world's most important companies. Our news is properly sourced, expertly written and thoroughly researched – with chicken entrails and everything. You can trust (most of) what you read here. That's why Newsdesk is the most wholesome magazine news service on Planet Earth.

NEWSDESK

IN NEWS THIS MONTH



△ We can't wait, we can't wait, we can't wait, we can't wait, etc.


△ The two-character mechanic has us intrigued. Interesting, no?

MARIO KART AND MORE!

NEW GAMES FOR THE CUBE! IN THE RUN-UP TO E3, NINTENDO LET SOME GOODIES SLIP... BY JES BICKHAM


As you read this, E3 will be kicking off in Los Angeles, and Kittsy will be pushing his way angrily through hordes of sweating Americans to play Nintendo's latest games. But as we write this, E3 is still a couple of weeks away, and our future-seeing machines are on the blink. What will those magical three days hold for Gamecube fans the world over?

But no matter that our oracles are malfunctioning, as pre-E3 mania has caused some juicy shots of brand-new games to appear, direct from the horse's mouth, if horses' mouths are indeed responsible for the delivering of screenshots.

First up is – can you believe it – the new *Mario Kart*! Yep, it's true. Rendered in the same primary-coloured brush-strokes as *Mario Sunshine*, *Mario Kart: Double Dash* (as it's now officially called) surprises in that it's got two characters per kart. Most obviously, this means that the secondary character is merely a fancy way of distributing power-up justice. But fascinatingly, along with six regular power-ups, there are eight special items linked to specific characters, meaning each tag-team (which comes as a single kart choice) has their own power-up ability. And characters can switch places too, making for some tactical action as you juggle drivers and power-ups.

We really can't wait to play this. It's going to be multiplayer heaven. And at the time of writing, Japanese mag Famitsu has apparently stated that the game will use the broadband adaptor to link two Gamecubes (and two tellies), together for eight-player mayhem. If that's true, this will be utterly magnificent stuff.

More new shots of *Pikmin 2* arrived this month as well, and while the game is plainly an update of the first title, the addition of a co-operative two-player mode is welcome, and there also appears to be at least two new Pikmin types –


△ What are these round things? Seeds? Berries? Bloody eyeballs?


△ The view from an AT-ST. Set fire to trees and squish Stormtroopers.



R&D
Nintendo have established a new research and development studio in Tokyo, to concentrate on first-party games. Interesting...

CAPCOM CANCELLATIONS
Capcom haven't been performing quite as well as they'd hoped over the past year with a number of key titles falling short of target

KART CONTENT

MK64 may have been an easier prospect for the single player than the SNES's *Super Mario Kart*, but with four players it just couldn't be beaten. While we're sure *Double Dash* will prove to be an excellent game, there are some things we'd really like to see in it.

A decent Battle Mode, for a start. *MK64*'s was perfunctory at best, with arguably only one decent level to play it on.

And while some people were incensed that *MK64* was riddled with shortcuts – many appeared to be bugs – *MKDD* needs to have some of the calibre of the famed Mario Raceway shortcut. Plus, natch, some astonishingly well-designed tracks for tip-top time-trialling. We expect *Double Dash* will keep I'm The Best in challenges for years to come…



△ This will be the greatest four-player game in the history of mankind.

portly purple Pikmin, and worryingly emaciated albinos, complete with staring pink eyes. It also seems that there are more than 100 Pikmin in the field in one of the shots, plus no time limit. All minor-sounding tweaks, perhaps, but ones that nonetheless will make fundamental differences to the experience. The original game was simply joyous; expect this to be so as well.

Finally, the worst-kept secret of the gaming world: *Rogue Squadron III*. Yes, there's yet *another* Hoth level – but as you can apparently exit your vehicle and run around on foot (see Skywalker shimmy up an AT-AT's inside leg) this gives it a whole new dimension. But anyway, the visuals looks as incredible as before, if not more so, and Hoth again appears to be a stand-out moment.

In fact, there seems to be rather a lot of on-foot action – one shot explicitly shows the player accompanied by Chewbacca *inside* the Death Star. We're assuming the third-person bits are linking sequences between vehicle-changes.

Speaking of vehicles, there's a bunch of new ones, not least Speeder Bikes and AT-STs in the verdant forests of Endor. But most excitingly, a co-operative mode will be included. If it's fast and smooth this'll be astonishingly fun, and just what *Rogue Leader* was missing to make it a truly great game.

We'll have much, much more on all these games next issue, along with whatever else being unveiled, when Martin returns from E3. The future's bright; and it's most certainly Cube-shaped.

In the meantime, here's some of our, erm, considered viewpoints on the new titles…

> **"THERE ARE NOW FAT PURPLE PIKMIN AND EMACIATED ALBINO ONES WITH PINK EYES"**

MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH

Jes The new look is interesting – Wacky Races-style cars rather than proper karts. As long as they powerslide properly, though, that's the main thing. I can't wait for this, and I have every hope that it'll be hugely fun. My optimism, however, is counterbalanced by Martin's cynicism…

Martin No doubt it'll play well, but I'm not too sure about the look. Those aren't karts – they're Chitty Chitty Bang Bang and a wooden barrel, among other things. And Diddy Kong has no place in a Nintendo game. I don't think Shigsy had much to do with this.

Geraint It's great to see Nintendo going for a new approach. Just another straight kart game would have been fine – but I think this will give the series a much-needed extra dimension. Even if you don't like the way it looks, you just know it's going to brilliant.

△ Look how many TIE Fighters there are! This is going to be utterly ace.

PIKMIN 2

Jes I loved *Pikmin*, despite its short lifespan, and it delivered a fine 'sense of wonder'. I wonder how the lack of time limit will impact the game, but this is certainly looking polished and beautiful.

Martin Nice. The fat purple Pikmin is pretty cool, and that albino ghost one is creepy. Looks much the same as the last one, of course.

Geraint Excuse me if I don't get too overexcited about this one. The two-player and lack of time limit is welcome… but… hmmm… *Mario Kart*… Aaaagghhaaaggaahhh…

ROGUE SQUADRON III

Jes It'll be interesting to see how the on-foot sections work, and I hope they don't detract from the frenetic fighting and shooting. If there's anything half as beautiful as the Vengeance on Kothlis level here I'll be sold. And the co-op mode is a stroke of genius.

Martin Lovely graphics. As long as it doesn't turn into *Shadows of the Empire*, it should do well (*Cynical today, aren't we? – Ed*).

Geraint The Wookiee looks rubbish. I reckon the odds are two to one that those sections are going to 'suck ass' (*What? – Ed*). The rest of it looks lovely, though, and co-op should be something really special.



△ *Pikmin 2* sees you salvaging treasure to stave off bankruptcy. Economical!

SHORT CUTS

JUDGE DREDD

NDA productions have announced that they will publish the new *Judge Dredd vs Judge Death* game from the respected Oxford-based developer Rebellion, who were responsible for the brilliant *Aliens vs Predator* on PC. The game will feature a specially designed 'graphic novel renderer' to give the title its distinctive look. We'll have more from E3, but in the meantime check out these shots.



BAT-COMIC

Hope you enjoyed last month's special-edition *Batman* comic. If you didn't get one, drop us a line at the usual address and we'll pop one in the post for you. How's 'bat' sound? Hahahahaha!

sales. As a result they've decided to cull 18 of their in-development titles. It's unclear if any of these include the 'Big Five' everyone is so looking forward to...

NAMCO TO BUY SEGA?
According to a Japanese newspaper, this could well be the case. Namco have also stated on their Japanese website that an agreement has already been made. Sega say they are in talks with the company, while Sammy (who are currently looking to set up a merger with Sega), have denied the reports. Very odd.

DISAGREE WITH MOST WANTED? Then email us at ngc@futurenet.co.uk or write to us at NGC, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW and tell us the three games you're most looking forward to. Every month, we'll tally up the scores on the doors and change the list accordingly.



MOST WANTED!

The kind of software you'd beat your granny for. With a shovel. Maybe.





THIS MONTH

Splinter Cell is reviewed this month! Head on over to page page 44. Read it by casting your eyes over those black marks we call 'words' and absorb them into the intangible mush of what you call your cerebral cortex…



1 MARIO KART

By the time you read this you'll most likely have already seen this in action – beamed from the electronic madhouse that is the E3 show floor. In fact, Kittsy's probably playing it right now. If by 'playing it' you mean 'surreptitiously wrenching it out of a booth with a crowbar'.

UK 2003 | US 2003 | JAPAN 2003



2 ANIMAL CROSSING

UK NEVER | US NOW | JAPAN NOW

Sweet mother of Mary. Haven't you lot heard of the Freeloader? If Nintendo won't bring it to you, you'll have to go and get it yourself, you know. Then maybe, just maybe, you can all stop your pathetic whining. IMPORT IT YOU NUMBNUTSES! (*Nurse, the screens! – Ed*)



3 F-ZERO

UK TBA | US AUGUST | JAPAN JULY

With more vocoded robotic-nonsense than that there Cher song comes this thing of true beauty from the people that brought you *Daytona USA*. You just know it's going to be amazing. We'd go as far as betting old Cap'n Falcon's solid-gold nipple rings on it.



4 MARIO TENNIS

UK TBA | US TBA | JAPAN TBA

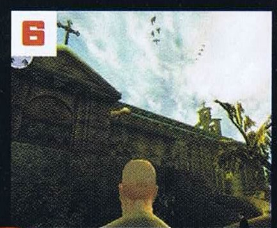
"To see Good Tennis! What divine joy
Can fill our leisure, or our minds employ?
Let other people play at other things;
The King of Games is still the Game of Kings"
From Parker's Piece by JK Stephen, May 1891



5 ENTER THE MATRIX

UK MAY | US MAY | JAPAN TBA

Imagine being in the Wachowski brothers' bank vault. Waiting silently for all that lovely cash to come flowing down the money chute, showering you until the weight of gold irreparably crushes your bones and bruises your face. Just imagine it. IMAGINE IT!



6 HITMAN 2

UK JUNE | US JUNE | JAPAN TBA

Scientifically proven (by studying his pancreatic polypeptides) to be the only game capable of subduing Martin's addiction to killing. Eidos, in partnership with Genentech, have provided the technology to pipe its images of violence directly into his spine.



7 SOUL CALIBUR II

UK AUTUMN | US AUTUMN | JAPAN NOW

Some (mostly bald) people would have you believe that the bigger the ears or the weapon, the easier the victory. Ignorance that can be rectified by inserting daggers into the head before administering humiliating beated-ings until well after the battle is won.



8 SPLINTER CELL

UK 2003 | US 2003 | JAPAN 2003

Long-awaited port of the Xbox stealth-'em-up where you "stalk from the shadows and strike with precision". What it fails to mention is that you can shoot someone in the head twice, only for them to remain alive. Real sweet, that.



9 1080° AVALANCHE

UK WINTER | US 2003 | JAPAN 2003

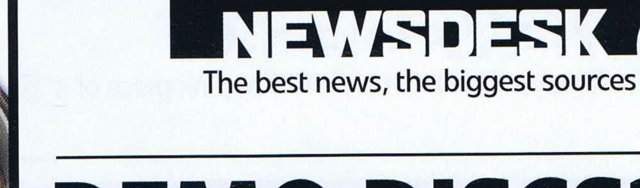
Moved back in-house after ex-developers Leftfield severed their ties with Nintendo, you can expect this to be as superbly crafted as its predecessor, if not more so. We'll have more for you on this one next month once Kittsy gets back from E3…





#	Game	Description	UK	US	JAPAN
10	MARIO GOLF	Mario infused sticksie-ball.	TBA	JULY	JULY
11	STARCRAFT: GHOST	Tasty sci-fi stealth action.	XMAS	XMAS	TBA
12	VIEWTIFUL JOE	Mad cartoon beated-'em-up.	SUMMER	SUMMER	JUNE
13	WINNING ELEVEN 6	Best footie game in existence.	TBA	TBA	NOW
14	STARFOX ARMADA	A proper foxy dogfighter.	TBA	TBA	TBA
15	DRIVER 3	The taxi service for criminals.	TBA	TBA	TBA
16	PIKMIN 2	Veggie sequel for two players.	TBA	TBA	TBA
17	RESIDENT EVIL 4	At a guess? Guns; zombies.	2004	2004	2004
18	WARIO WORLD	Yellow fat man throw-'em-up.	TBA	TBA	SUMMER
19	KILLER 7	Schizophrenic detective game.	TBA	TBA	TBA
20	KIRBY'S AIR RIDE	Like a a big pink *Mario Kart*.	TBA	TBA	2003
21	LOVEJOY: AUCTIONEER	Be the bad boy of antiques.	IAN	MC	SHANE
22	CRYSTAL CHRONICLES	Four-way fun. That isn't rude.	TBA	TBA	SUMMER
23	XIII	FPS gunnage the Belgian way.	WINTER	WINTER	TBA
24	METAL GEAR SOLID	It is coming. Yes it is.	TBA	TBA	TBA
25	DEAD PHOENIX	Blessed's flying adventure.	TBA	TBA	TBA

WRITE TO… MAILBOX/NGC/30 MONMOUTH STREET/BATH/BA1 2BW OR EMAIL NGC@FUTURENET.CO.UK





▲ It's looking extremely colourful, but then it is from Sonic Team.

SEGA'S NEW HATCHLING

Sonic Team's contender for the world's stupidest game name...



While the gaming world was gunning for a next-gen update of *NiGHTS*, *Samba de Amigo* or indeed any other sequel to Sonic Team's impressive back catalogue, Yuji Naka, creator of *Phantasy Star Online* and *Sonic*, revealed he was working on a completely new game. A game called *Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg*.

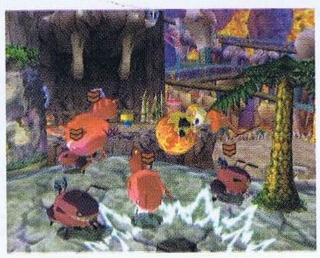
No, old Naka hasn't branched out into childrens' literature. It's the name of Sonic Team's first completely new platform adventure since the Saturn days, and, despite the rather bizarre title choice, the premise is an intriguing one.

As usual, there's a nasty old bully ruling the game world with an iron fist. This tyrant is threatening to cast eternal night over the once-magical kingdom, and it's up to you as (cough) 'Billy Hatcher' to stop him. Stop him in the only way you can. By wearing a 'legendary suit', and 'rolling eggs'.

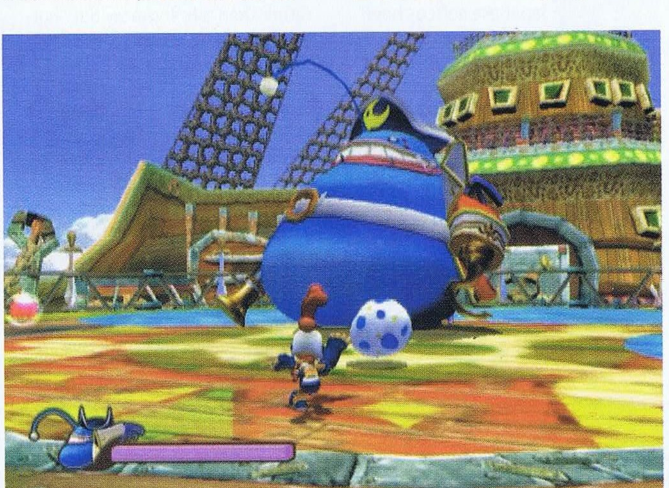
Apparently, Billy will roll the eggs around to solve puzzles and defeat enemies (two to one on those eggs being used to depress door-opening switches, then). More intriguing, however, is Billy's ability to hatch the eggs into magical creatures that will enhance his abilities.

Taking the form of a high-speed 3D platformer, the environments we've seen so far are all blindingly colourful, with a touch of the carnivalesque about them.

Although it's too early to tell, no doubt Sonic Team, who have an excellent track record for quality, will turn out an original and worthwhile title. The game will be in playable form at E3 so expect a full report from Kittface when he returns.



▲ Don't ask us what's going on here.



▲ Boys dressed as chickens rolling giant eggs deserve to be squashed.



LAKITU'S LENS

MARIO ON THE TELLY? PEACH ADVERTISING THRUSH CREAM OR GANON PLUGGING HAIR DYE? LET US KNOW...

POCKET TRASH

Thanks to Matt Reeve from Dorset for this Nintendo nugget from the Foo Fighters video for Times like These. It shows a little girl lobbing her GBA off of a bridge. Unfortunately it doesn't smack monkey-faced ex-Nirvana drummer Dave Grohl in the skull. So why the waste? She's probably just realised how little Gamestation will give her for it in a trade-in...

WRITE TO LAKITU'S LENS, NGC, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW

Entries sent with picture evidence will win a game.

DEMO DISCS?

Apparently so. But not over here quite yet. In the US, Nintendo announced that they'd be releasing a demo disc that would give American gamers a sneak peek at some forthcoming titles, as well as high-profile games that are already doing the rounds. Games tentatively listed for inclusion are *Soul Calibur II*, *Splinter Cell*, *Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg* (see opposite), *Sonic Adventure DX* and *Viewtiful Joe*.

This is certainly great news. Miyamoto himself once said Nintendo would never release demo discs as they always give an inaccurate impression of the finished product – failing to see of course, that they're also a fantastic way of tempting gamers to buy future releases.

As to whether they'll make an appearance over here – anything's possible. If the demo discs make a noticeable impact in the States, expect Europe to follow suit.

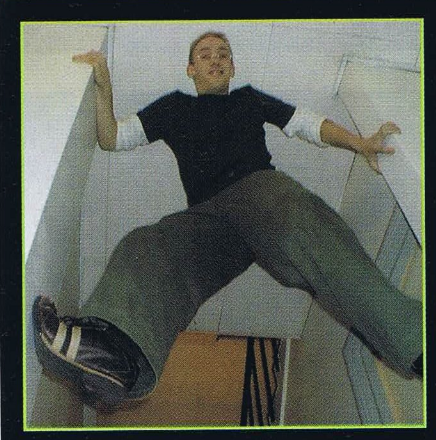


▲ A sneak peek at *VJ* would be real sweet.

VIRTUAL REALITY

NINTENDO GAMING MOMENTS 'COME TRUE'.

THIS MONTH Stealthily hiding in the shadows – the NSA way...



THE TEST
In one of his increasingly elaborate efforts to avoid making the tea, Geraint attempts the 'Sam Fisher Splits'. A manoeuvre requiring great flexibility and thighs of steel...



RESULT
Hideously contorted and wailing in agony, we find him in the kind of twisted physical configuration that a yogi can only dream of. "Make mine a milk and two sugars then, you slacker..."





△ It's not exactly the Pokémon game we've been waiting for...



△ Display your Pokémon as card standees. Thrilling, isn't it? Isn't it?

POKEMON ON GC!

They're coming to the Cube! But it's not quite what you think…



At long last, Pokémon is making the leap to the Gamecube. But it isn't the full-3D RPG we were hoping for. Nor, even, is it the *Pokémon Stadium* sequel many were expecting. Or even the Pokémon assassination sim Kittsy was fervently praying for ("Jigglypuff will get it first, that pink piece of s*@!", he vowed). Nope, this Cube introduction – known as *Pokémon Box* – was revealed in Japanese mag KoroKoro Comic, and is merely an expansion of sorts to the GBA's *Ruby* and *Sapphire* (out here in July, fact fans). Hmm.

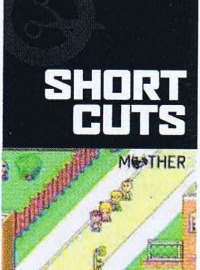
By linking the disc and the GBA games, you can basically look at your Pokémon on the telly, with their numerous statistics and abilities shown off for all to see. It's also possible to organise your Pokémon and arrange them in fancy backgrounds to show to your chums – and with space for up to 1500 small monsters, that's a lot of Pokémon action.

But, as you can probably see, this isn't much of a game. Indeed, Nintendo are flogging the disc cheap in Japan, selling it in two different bundles. One with a memory card, and another with both a memory card and a GBA link-up cable. The cards will also be in fancy colours unavailable elsewhere.

So, all very interesting, eh? There's no word on whether *Pokémon Box* will be coming to the UK, but if *Ruby* and *Sapphire* prove a hit, we would expect so. Meanwhile, as you read this, Martin will be at E3 seeing what Nintendo have got to come for the following year – and we'd be a little surprised if a proper Gamecube Pokémon game hasn't been at least hinted at…



△ Millions of tiny Pokémon, stored virtually for your delight and delectation.



SHORT CUTS





MOTHER!

As was rumoured last month, the *Mother* games are indeed returning to the world of Nintendo. The series, called *Earthbound* in the US (Ness of *Smash Bros* fame hails from Earthbound) won't hit the Cube just yet, though. It's all being ported for the GBA. *Mother 1* and *2* are well on the way, and famed N64 fatality *Mother 3* is indeed being worked on too. Producer Shigesato Itoi said that the GBA *Mother 3* will be "based on my original story and development, and development is progressing steadily". Hurrah!

BATTERY!

Not content with finally bringing us a rechargeable, backlit GBA at long last, Nintendo have already developed a longer-lasting battery for the gizmo. Allegedly offering a further 75 per cent lifespan to the GBA SP, it's due for later in the year and will apparently cost little over a tenner. Very nice news indeed, although couldn't they have sorted this out for the machine before it was launched? Tsk, etc.

TELLING TALES

Namco bring their much-beloved RPG series to the Gamecube. Rejoice!





△ This season's fashion is for cel-shading, as you can see here. It's not quite in *The Wind Waker's* league but is nonetheless a pretty-looking thing.







It seems that most Japanese softcos have an RPG series that identifies them – *Final Fantasy* for Square, *Dragon Quest* for Enix, and the *Tales* series for Namco. And, although we've yet to see a *Dragon Quest* game on the Cube, Namco are joining Square in bringing us some sweet stat-based gamin'.

Being developed by a new subsidiary of Namco dedicated solely to the creation of new *Tales* titles, *Tales of Symphonia* seems to be one of a new series of *Tales* games spread across multiple formats, rather than a brand-new title. But the Gamecube version is the first to sport fully 3D graphics.

As Lloyd Irving, you've got to save the world of Symphonia from destruction, and you've got two chums to help you out – Coolet Brunel and the marvellously-monikered Genius Sage. They are 16 and 12 respectively – very worrying.

Gameplay details are scarce, but we're expecting a decent 3D translation of the game's 2D mechanics. No European release date yet, but we'll keep you posted.

WORLD AT WAR
If you enjoyed Medal of Honor, you'll like Activision's next project, which aims to take a slice of the pie from EA's war-based franchise. They're going to be publishing a similar WWII shooter called Call of Duty (developed by Spark Unlimited), due for release later this year. It'll have an emphasis on 'gritty realism', apparently.

GBA Q
Panasonic are developing a GBA Player that will work with their DVD-playing 'Q'. It'll only be available in Japan, and there's no release date as yet.

WHAT IS THE NINTENDO DIFFERENCE? AND IS IT ACTUALLY WORKING?

It's the question that's been asked ever since Nintendo made it Gamecube's catchphrase, and it's never really been answered satisfactorily. It's also one of the most ill thought-out marketing devices ever. 'The Nintendo Difference', a lazy, undefined way of selling Nintendo games as being unique products that are only available on Gamecube.

What does it mean? Nothing, really. Not to the casual punter, who only sees dayglo colours and fat men in dungarees when they peruse the latest Cube games. And these are exactly the kind of people every console manufacturer wants to attract. This business is, after all, about getting people to buy your product and making them stick with you. How is 'The Nintendo Difference' meant to sway the 18 year-old with £40 in his pocket, looking for the next *Halo*?

But it means something to the 'hardcore', those that have stuck with Nintendo since the days of the NES. They know that Nintendo make the best games, and they know that Nintendo is a byword for hugely polished entertainment, innovation and immersive titles that charm quite like no other. Here on **NGC**, we're the 'hardcore'. While most of the team owns PS2s and Xboxes as well as Gamecubes, and can appreciate the strengths of games on other formats, we know that there's something about Nintendo games that makes them truly stellar.

> **"'THE NINTENDO DIFFERENCE'. A LAZY, UNDEFINED WAY OF SELLING NINTENDO GAMES AS UNIQUE PRODUCTS"**

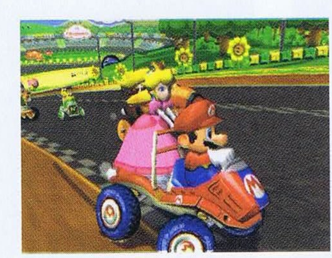


LOOK DEEPER

Zelda, for example. Where's the equivalent? And in the six years since *Mario 64*, what 3D platformer can hold a candle to Nintendo's masterpiece, other than *Mario Sunshine*? And therein lies the Nintendo difference – we know what it is, but it's hard to quantify.

So why use it as a selling point? Yes, most Nintendo games are unique, and Nintendo themselves have explained 'The Nintendo Difference' thusly: while third-party games are essential and desirable, it's the first-party exclusives that will sell the machine. That might be true enough, but how do you get people to buy these first-party exclusives?

There have been obvious moves to a more 'adult' Nintendo of late, such as the dark SF of *Metroid*, but *Zelda* and *Mario* are still colourful and 'kiddy' and it's this perception of Nintendo that can work against them. The new *Zelda* does look astonishingly childish (or should that be childlike?), but the result of the cartoon look is that it's the single most expressive videogame we've ever played. Nintendo need to get people to look beyond the surface and they're not doing a good job of it at the moment.



△ ***Mario Kart*. A shining, defining example of 'The Nintendo Difference'.**

STAMP OF QUALITY

Couple all this with aggressive marketing, and price-cutting from the opposition, and Nintendo's traditional wait-and-see approach just isn't helping people see 'The Nintendo Difference'. Sure, the recent Argos/Dixons affair sold plenty of Cubes and garnered much publicity, but it wasn't Nintendo's doing, and it was interesting to see the lack of reaction on their part.

But, despite this wooliness, people are buying *Zelda* and *Mario*. The 1.1 million sales of *Wind Waker* – and this excludes any PAL sales – and the pre-orders that outstripped *GTA: Vice City* prove that people still love Nintendo's franchises. History and an accompanying guarantee of quality, are driving these sales.

Nonetheless, not enough is being done to attract new punters, and, at the moment, Gamecube can't survive on its key franchises alone – as they're few and far between. And if 'The Nintendo Difference' means months of waiting between those all-important first-party exclusives, then there's a definite problem.

Hopefully, though, E3 will reinvigorate the Cube, and put 'The Nintendo Difference' into context. More first-party games are absolutely needed, and Nintendo's strategy of producing shorter games more often needs to become apparent as soon as possible.



DIFFERENT STROKES

What does the 'Nintendo Difference' mean to you? If, indeed, it means anything to you at all. If you're a regular reader of this magazine then presumably you're aware of what makes Nintendo games so good and so, well, different. But we'd like to know what your definition of the difference is, as the paying punters the marketing is aimed at. What does Nintendo mean to you? What is it about *Mario* and *Zelda* and *Metroid* that makes them better than anything else? Enquiring minds want to know...

DK MINIGAMES
The upcoming GBA port of Donkey Kong Country will feature multiplayer options. There'll be 'Funky's Fishing' – a, er, fish-'em-up – and Dandy's Dance Studio, a bemani-type thing. Sounds... interesting. Yes. Very... interesting.

MEGA!
Martin's in LA, at E3, as we speak. One of the things he'll be seeing is a recently-confirmed 'massive wave' of Mega Drive GBA ports, courtesy of Sega. There's money in them thar retro games, as old cowboys were never wont to say.

OUR PROMISE

Our reviewers are the most talented and knowledgeable Nintendo fans in the business. We don't only play games at work – we play them at home too, just like you. We ensure that we've played games through to the end so that we can give you a proper verdict – and one that saves you from wasting money.

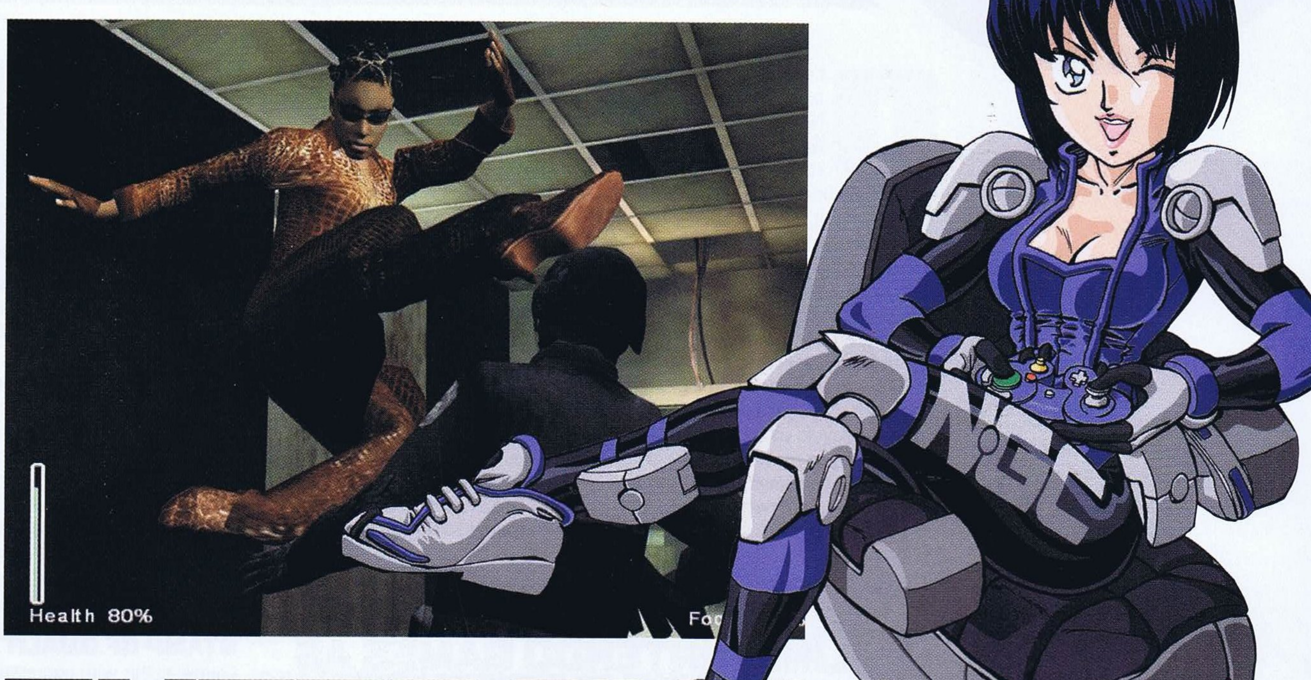
NGC THE VERDICT YOU DESERVE!

REVIEWS



WHAT IS PAL?

PAL is the UK's broadcasting standard. When you buy a Cube here it will be PAL. When you buy a Cube in the US or Japan it'll be NTSC – a different broadcasting standard, and the reason the two don't mix. Import games are NTSC games.



ENTER THE MATRIX

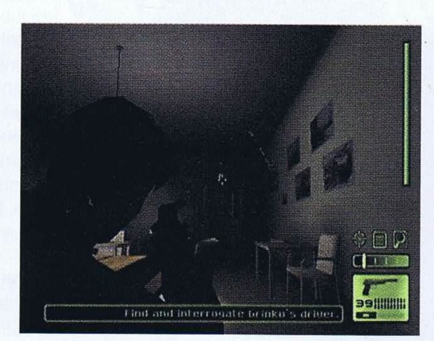
The game of the film, almost. Kick 'butt' while Keanu's off doing his thing in the biggest film licence ever. P26

WARNING! SPOILERS AHOY! OUR REVIEWS CONTAIN SENSITIVE INFO!



ZELDA: WIND WAKER

The best *Zelda* yet? Quite Possibly. Kittsy gives you the definitive verdict on the game of the year… P30



SPLINTER CELL

Sneakier than *Metal Gear*, slinkier than, er, a snake. Um. Anyway, the Xbox classic hits the Cube… P44

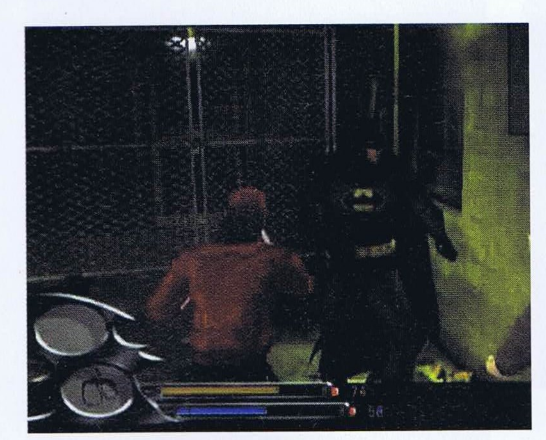


SKIES OF ARCADIA

The Dreamcast RPG gets ported, as if by digital witchcraft, to the Gamecube. It's a cracker. P50

HOW IT WORKS...

Our reviews are the most comprehensive on Earth. We devote more pages to the games you want to know about, and give you loads of detail. And in the new **NGC**, things just got better. Our Field of Play and Event-o-meter regulars will pinpoint a game's strengths, yet our verdicts remain the most honest around.



BATMAN

Hurrah! The Dark Knight plumbs new depths in this decidedly un-superheroic 'game'. Move over, *Superman 64*... P56



SOUL CALIBUR II

Geraint almost fainted when this came in the office. It's jolly splendid indeed. P66



GET INTO THE GAME

The quickest and smartest way for you to get started...





FIELD OF PLAY

The game's best bit taken apart and lovingly analysed...





EVENT-O-METER

The good bits, the bad bits – all in handy graph-form...





THE SCORE BAR

The verdict explained for you...

PROS AND CONS

Because we think it's important to provide you with balanced reviews, we'll sum up the game simply with plus and minus points.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Not all games are good (unsurprisingly) – so you'll be wanting to know what the alternative is. We'll provide suggestions here.

VISUALS AND SOUNDS

Gamecube sends PS2 packing. Do the visuals and sounds show this?

MASTERY

How well does the game make use of the Cube's startling hardware?

LIFESPAN

Will it last you a lifetime or a couple of minutes? Here you'll find out for sure...

VERDICT

We don't throw scores around – we give a game what it deserves. Here you will find the definitive verdict on whether you should purchase a game.



+
- Keeps him busy.
- A world of home improvement.
- New fences!

–
- It NEVER ENDS.
- Building work destroys foundations.
- Plastering.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Paul's Pigs: Hogwild
PorkSoft
NGC/123, 87%
More pig-rustling and ill thought-out business ideas than DIY, but similar (ish).



8 VISUALS
A Sims-like cornucopia of home improvement.

7 SOUNDS
The clattering of hammers and drone of sanding.

9 MASTERY
Every tedious DIY activity you can think of, and then some.

10 LIFESPAN
There's quite literally always something to do.

VERDICT
Webb's Wonderland: The Hell of Home Improvement is all you need to know about DIY.

NGC 78

5 OUR SCORING SYSTEM

NGC STAR GAME

0-24	25-49	50-74	75-89	90+
Crushingly awful, massively dull. Rest assured, this is crud.	Disappointing, stashed with faults and likely to be short on any quality.	Some great bits, some not-so-great bits. Decent but definitely problems.	Great fun, brilliantly programmed at times, but probably flawed.	Rarely awarded, you'll know a 90+ is absolutely essential.

MEET THE NGC TEAM

Despite their wasted bodies, Team **NGC** reckon they could be in The Matrix...



JES
Jes likens himself to Matrix boss-man Morpheus. "We're both bald, and, er, well, I could be big and muscular. Really." Jes then wept.



JUD
Not only a gun-nut, Jud is also fascinated by DIY. He bemoaned the lack of decent grouting on the Nebuchadnezzar. "Amateurs", said he.



DAN
Perpetually drunk, Dan is only intermittently lucid. "Wah", he slurred, before tipping his green plastic hat back and falling asleep.



MARTIN
"I just love those sexy agents, in their black suits and shades", said Martin, revealing a hitherto unseen softer side. "Makes me feel all... excited."



GERAINT
The miracle of moving pictures has yet to reach the corner of Wales Geraint calls 'home'. "I paint cave walls with my own filth", he offered.



PAUL
"I love the Matrix. Who'd have thought we're living in a big computer, eh? Not me. Because I live in a house." Can't argue with that.



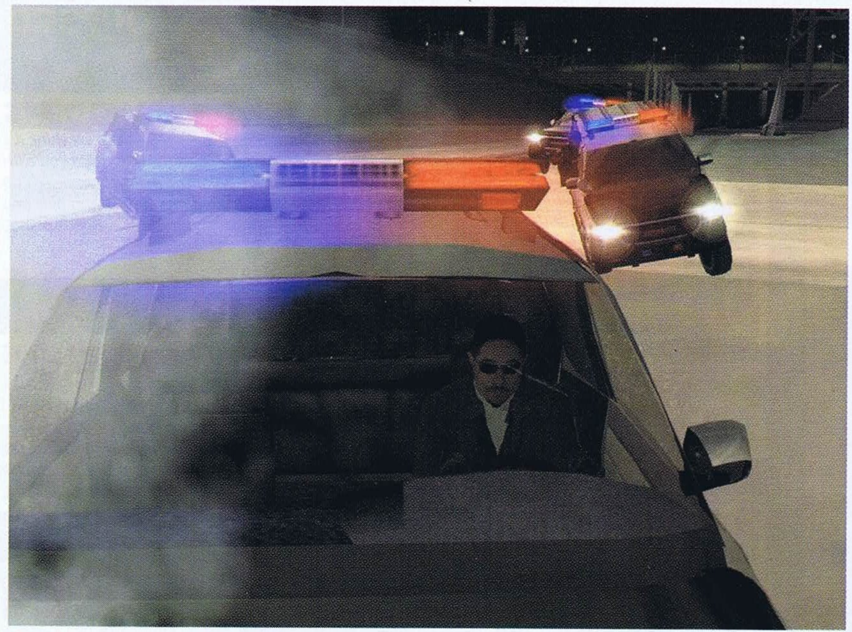
TOM
Tom liked the Matrix, but being barely more than a rude beast, he mauled an usher. "I am not an animal" was found scrawled on his cell wall.

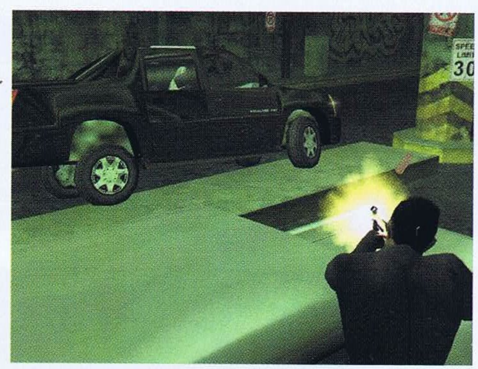


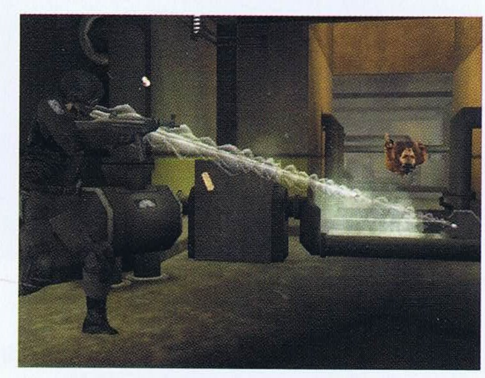
CHRIS
Art droid Bates01 had this to say: "Flesh is weak. Destroy the flesh. Meat-time has passed. All hail the metal future." Then he had a cup of tea.

Your meat is my clay, and I am the potter of your soul: lesbian

"Unexpected invisible walls lead to frustrating deaths"


△ Driving sections are fast and furious, as Shiny intended, but visually they lack polish.

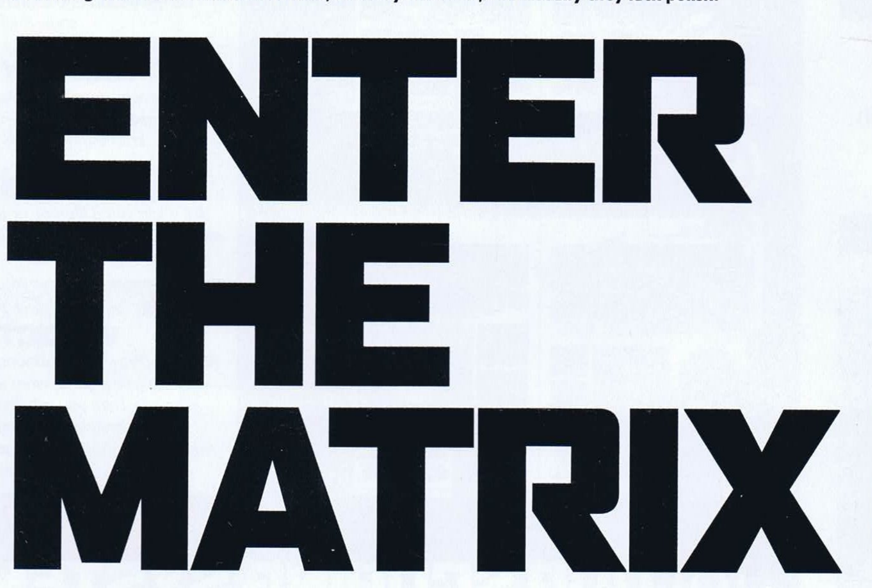

△ Ghost can shoot from the car for limited periods.


△ Activate Focus to see the enemies' bullet trails.


△ The machines can now duplicate Agents at will.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	INFOGRAMES
DEVELOPER	SHINY
RELEASE DATE	NOW
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	2
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40



ENTER THE MATRIX

Take the red pill – now in handy game form! It's the companion piece to summer's inevitable movie blockbuster…



GET INTO THE GAME

Get off the starting blocks fast with these hints…

ENTERING THE MATRIX

On starting Enter the Matrix *you'll have a choice of of two characters to play with. It's entirely up to you which one to go for (they're really not all that different) and the story remains largely the same. There are also three difficulty levels, which determine the speed with which your health and Focus replenishes.*

The game begins in a post office of all places, where you have to retrieve a disk that has vital information stored on it.

CHOP SOCKY

The main buttons you'll need are A, X and Y. These are punch, kick and shoot respectively. You can also open doors with Z (the ones that are unlocked show a green hand icon when you stand next to them), and activate your Focus meter with L.





Would you like to jack back in?" says the Game Over message. You don't want to know how many times we've looked at that sentence. It doesn't take long for the trademark hypnotic green code tumbling down the screen to release its initially enchanting grip, and then become a major cause of irritation.

Yet still we continue to press 'Yes'.

JACKING IN

And you'd wonder why after playing the opening moments of *Enter the Matrix*. The initial sections of the game don't inspire confidence, with bland and dull environments. There's no richness or detail in the textures, just wall after wall, and crate after crate, of repeated objects and concrete (the floors are nice and shiny, mind).

Help Keanu find spoons in the game of the movie…

SECONDARY WEAPON

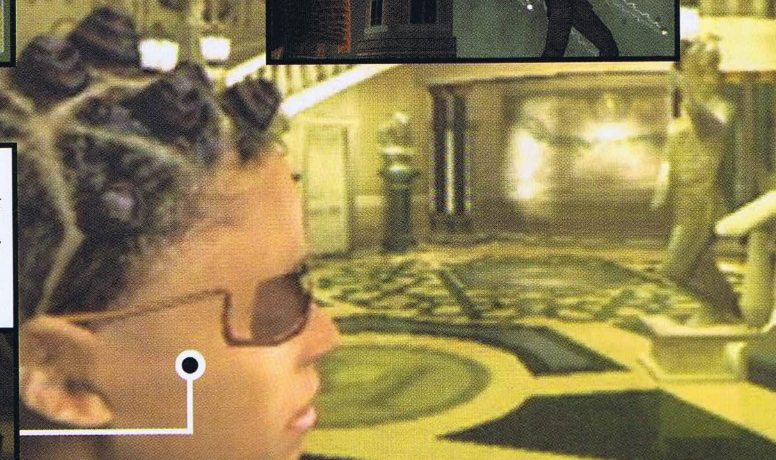
Normally these come in just a couple of forms – grenades and even bigger grenades. Unfortunately they're rather hard to aim, and bounce off walls as though they were made of rubber. Handy that.





GUNS

You'll never be short of these. Practically every enemy drops something for you to pick up and shoot – and then become your first line of attack. The sniper rifle is particularly good.



MAIN CHARACTER

You have a choice between Niobe and Ghost. Ghost is a little better with weapons; Niobe better with her fists. Apart from that, the levels remain largely the same, with only some minor plot differences – which we're won't go into here…



FOCUS

This is the puppy that slows down time and allows you to boost your abilities. It only lasts a little while and then you have to wait for it to start charging back up before you can use it again.
It is essential when caught battling agents or dodging bullets. Your Focus meter's potential can be improved by dispatching enemies in hand-to-hand combat.

WALL GAME

Using Focus near walls gives you the ability to scale them, run up and around corners and leap off ceilings to get behind your opponents. You can even use it to launch yourself over distances or for giving leverage to kick attacks.





This lack of detail is highlighted when you're playing as Niobe. Her character model, in particular, is superb. With a slinky, shiny snakeskin coat and some really detailed hair, she sticks out like a sore thumb.

The problem is accentuated because the characters' relationship with the world around them feels frustratingly inconsistent. Their feet slide all over the shop, and unexpected invisible walls in the most unlikely places – many of which lead to frustrating deaths – hamper your perception of freedom. These are just a few examples of how the illusion that the game world attempts to set up is shattered by the variable presentation.

Furthermore, laughable animations, including Niobe scuttling up a fence like a crab, punctuated with short snippets of hilariously portentous dialogue such as "I am the key maker – you are not meant to die here" (which, incidentally precedes an even *more* cringeworthy cut-scene) will have you rolling on the floor in two minds as to whether you should clutch your belly in laughter or wipe away the tears of desperation. Hardly the slick representation of stylishness that *The Matrix* strives so hard to embody.

> **"THE ILLUSION THE GAME WORLD TRIES TO SET UP IS SHATTERED BY VARIABLE PRESENTATION"**



HACKING

This is a superb addition and, in some ways, proves a little more engrossing than the game. There are no instructions, just a DOS-like operating system for you to explore. You can uncover all kinds of goodies, such as cheat codes. No doubt many of you will be tinkering away with this well after the game's been beaten.

DID YOU KNOW? The Wachowski brothers are notoriously secretive – their last press conference Q&A in 1999 lasted for a whopping three questions, due to their curt answers…

"You'll be amazed at how many skills you have at your disposal"

NGC FIELD OF PLAY

One of the game's high points this – mental heart-staking in a Chateau full of goths…



BEAUTY

At last! After spending what seems like a decade in the mind-numbingly tedious sewers (we actually contemplated suicide at one point), you reach this opulent Chateau where you get to indulge in some great fighting sequences. The decor is much better than the dull-as-hell locations you're normally in…

BEAST

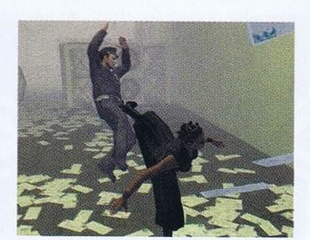
Goths. Loads of them. Or possibly vampires. They put up a little resistance, too. Beat them by counter-attacking, then driving stakes into their hearts.



△ Nice coat for Niobe. The same level of detail isn't evident on the enemies.



△ You can smash through windows. And so can agents.



△ Expect to do a lot of this.



△ Security guards are pretty weak. Use a one-punch combo to see them off.

Structurally, the game is very simple, with much running from point A to point B. These destinations can be a door or a vital object that needs to reached. You spend most of your time simply sprinting down corridors, through rooms, around gantries and up ladders, as if you're on some enormous, convoluted assault course that's only broken up into sections by save points and cut-scenes. Along the way you have to shoot, punch and kick your way through enemy after enemy after enemy.

You have two hand-to-hand combat attacks – punch and kick. Pressing both together executes a throw. When you near an enemy, the game automatically locks on to them, allowing you to circle-strafe. You also have a number of weapons at your disposal. Tapping Y brings up your currently equipped weapon, which can be used to take enemies down from a safe distance.

On top of this, you have a Focus button. Hitting this slows down time and warps the screen a little in that all-too-familiar Matrix way. Focus serves a number of other functions too. It can alter the moves you use, the accuracy of your aiming, the length of your jump, the height you can fall safely and the speed at which you can run. It also lets you see the paths of bullets, cartwheel while shooting, run up and around walls and backflip off ceilings.

The effect is absolutely mesmerising. Not only does it give you a better glimpse of the truly awesome fighting animations, but it opens up a truly bewildering array of moves that allow you to take out enemies in every conceivable way.

The battle system is context-sensitive. Hitting punch, kick or throw and a direction on the analogue allows you to strike out high and low at any enemies around you. Splits, trips and uppercuts, backwards roundhouses, flying kicks off walls, throws ending in shotgun blasts to the head… it's all there. You'll be amazed at how many skills you have at your disposal and how many new ones you'll be discovering the more you play.

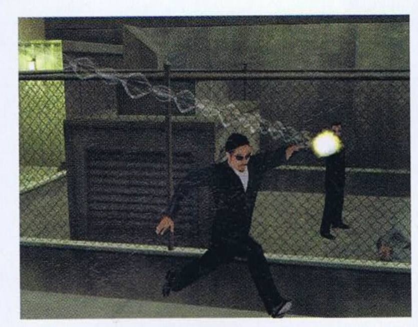


DETAILS

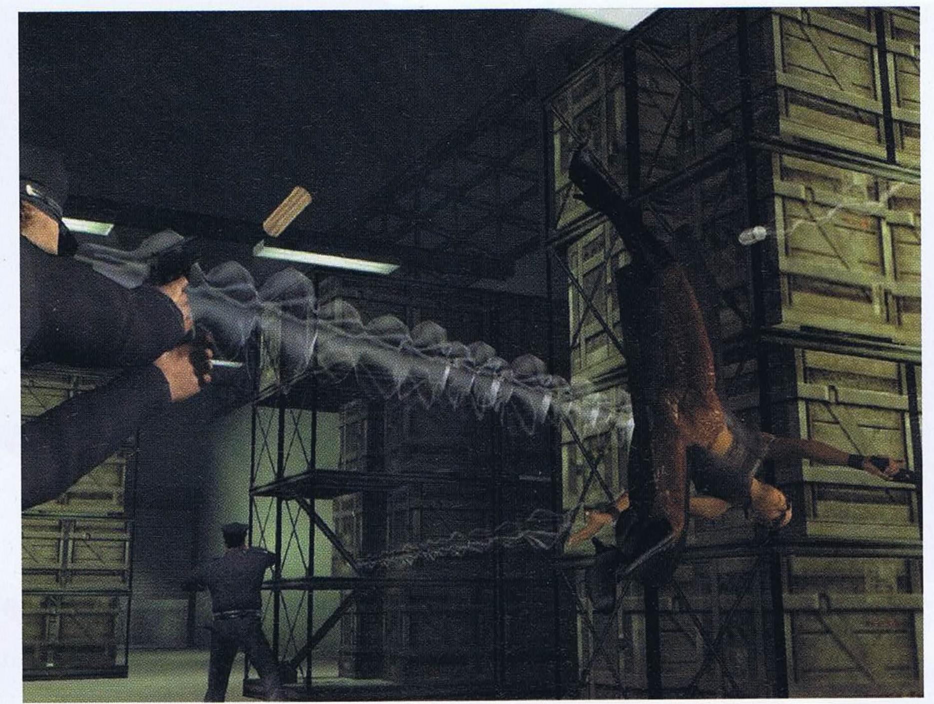
While some aspects of the game are ropey, other bits are superb. The game runs really smoothly to start with. The character models are also impressive, in the level of detail on things like hands, mouth and hair. The cut-scenes using the in-game engine are all brilliant, and go very well with the film footage itself. Lovely.

I KNOW KUNG FU

Gunplay isn't quite as exciting unfortunately, but the hand-to-hand combat and enhanced focus abilities more than make up for any scripting and presentation issues – at one point we found ourselves backtracking through a level once our health had replenished, simply to, er, 'dispatch' a SWAT team we knew we'd left


△ Escaping agents is something you have to do a lot. Run for your life!


△ Agents are not to be messed with. Fight them and you'll eventually get wasted.


△ The acrobatics are to be commended, but just look at the scenery. Warehouses, concrete corridors and repeated textures are the game's staple diet. Very, very disappointing indeed.



- Fast and very smooth.
- Interesting story.
- Amazing fights.



- Unimaginative set-pieces.
- Very repetitive.
- Very glitchy.

IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Blood Rayne
Majesco
NGC/79 65%
Another bullet-timed fight-and-sprint-a-thon. With vampires and Nazis.



8 VISUALS
Great animation but rather depressing, samey backgrounds.

7 SOUNDS
Some music from the film, and middling-to-poor dialogue.



6 MASTERY
Some glitches and lacking in polish - but the fighting is ace.

7 LIFESPAN
The quality of the fighting adds some replay value. Kind of.

VERDICT
The subject matter makes it compelling and the fighting system is praise-worthy, but it's still a flawed gaming experience.



HARD DRIVIN'
Not as frequent as the fighting bits, these sections are a nice diversion.



ESCAPE
The driving sections, more often than not, revolve around getting away from agents or police by racing through roadblocks to get to your destination.



CHASE
Here, you're chasing Morpheus and co on a busy highway – far and away the best driving sequence in the game, with both agents and cops after you.



SHOTGUN
If you play as Ghost you get to lean out of the window and shoot stuff. Definitely the best option, as the driving can be rather frustrating – mainly because…



WOBBLER
… the handling is pretty lame, with slight collisions sending you careering all over the place. In contrast to Agent Under Fire's sections, the driving is poor.



CLIMAX?
The final section of the game is where you'd expect things to really kick off – only they don't. You have to fly a ship through the tunnels of the 'real world', avoiding debris and blasting sentinels. It is, without doubt, a major disappointment. It's clearly been rushed and, of all things, reminds us of Sewer Shark. Rubbish.

unscathed previously.

Unfortunately, no matter how good the fighting system might be, you can't escape the fact that all you're doing is sprinting down a predetermined path before stopping to shoot or fight the hundreds of identical SWAT goons that stand in your way. That's it, with some driving sections thrown in.

Every five minutes or so, you get treated to a cut-scene using the game engine or (better) some proper bespoke footage featuring the actors from the movie. Very nice. But all this stopping and starting never lets you get a sense of flow, and ultimately makes the experience rather jilted.

Granted, there are some choice moments in the game (the fight sequences in the the Chateau are particularly good), because you face off against opponents who aren't bungling idiots, while the story as a whole is interesting – and the latter levels challenging – enough to make you want to keep playing.

> **"UNLESS YOU PLAY THROUGH THE GAME, YOU'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND THE 'WHOLE TRUTH' BEHIND THE MOVIE…"**

And that's pretty much the only reason to 'jack back in' after you suffer your 200th unfair, and untimely, death. It's… The Matrix. There's lots of stuff in here you won't see in the film, and unless you play through the game, you'll never understand the 'whole truth' behind the movie.

But whatever you do, don't buy the game expecting the same level of inevitable panache and polish of the forthcoming blockbuster. As a 'game', it falls at the kind of hurdles that can only be remedied through more development time – something which developers Shiny clearly didn't have, as the game absolutely had to be released alongside the film. However, as an 'entertainment experience' and companion piece to the movie it succeeds in delivering both the right kind of atmosphere and action to keep anyone – especially fans – happy.

GERAINT EVANS

"The Hero of Time's deeds live on in legend and folklore"



△ Chuck bombs in the water and they make a brilliant plume of spray. Quite literally hours of fun.

△ Here's looking at you, Link. Please stop staring.



△ You'll find loads of knowing winks towards previous games in the series.



△ Here's where Link's old dear makes her tasty soup.

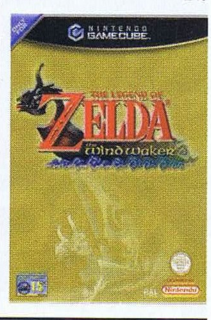
NGC STAR GAME

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA THE WIND WAKER



INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	NINTENDO
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	12
GBA LINK-UP	YES
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40



Splice the mainbrace, shiver your timbers and set sail for the voyage of a lifetime… Link's back in a new *Zelda*!



GET INTO THE GAME

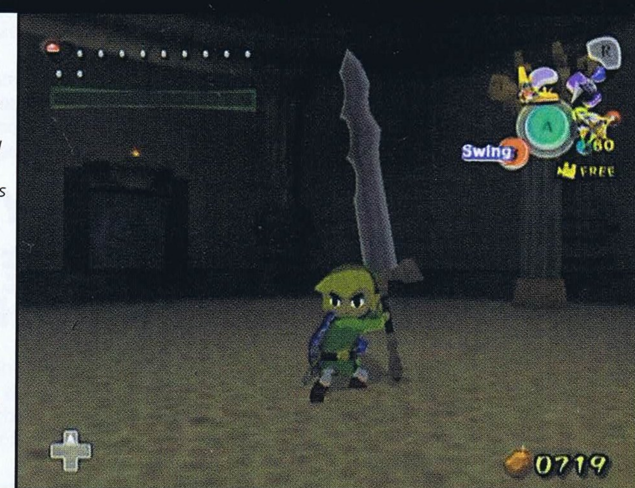
There are a couple of chores to take care of before embarking on your adventure…

SWORDSMANSHIP

One of the first tasks is to learn how the combat system works. Orca is the only man on Outset Island who knows how to fight, and he'll teach you all the basics. You can spar with him whenever you feel the urge, and there are bonuses for hitting him up to 1,000 times, which takes a while and is rather tedious. You can ignore this part, of course, unless you're desperate to collect every last item.

PIGSY

It's definitely worth collecting pigs for the fat woman who lives behind Orca's house. Do this before leaving Outset Island and you'll get some great comedy moments when you return. You'll also be able to dig up extra treasure, assuming you have the patience of a pig-handler – and a very strong back!





THE WIND WAKER

A load of hot air, or a pixie-perfect work of art?

CONTEXT SENSITIVE

The action buttons change function according to what Link is doing. Back when Ocarina of Time came out, this was totally revolutionary.

DEEP BLUE

It's a wet old world out there. Forty-nine islands lie scattered across an ocean so large you can sail for several minutes before hitting land.

KING OF RED LIONS

He claims to be the world's only talking boat. We've seen nothing to suggest that this may not be the case, so we're inclined to believe him. He also seems to have his own agenda for wanting Link to succeed in the fight against evil.

There are good games, there are great games, and there are those games so feverishly anticipated, that the waiting becomes an event in itself.

We've got used to expecting epic delays with most Nintendo titles, and particularly *Legend of Zelda*. But now we've got the UK version of the latest instalment in this magnificent series, and it's here less than a year after the game was first unveiled to a disbelieving crowd at a press conference in a Los Angeles hotel.

So how did they do it, and how did they do it so quickly? And, now that we've had the chance to play it through in English, does the suspicion raised in our review of the Japanese version, four months ago, still hold true – that this is the shallowest *Zelda* ever?...

"IT'S SET MANY GENERATIONS AFTER OCARINA, WHICH SEEMS TO BE THE DEFINING CHAPTER"

It's set many generations after the end of *Ocarina of Time*, which seems to be the defining chapter in the series. There's nobody left who remembers the kingdom of Hyrule, and what happened to it, but the Hero of Time's deeds live on in legend

"A family tragedy forces Link to become an unlikely hero"

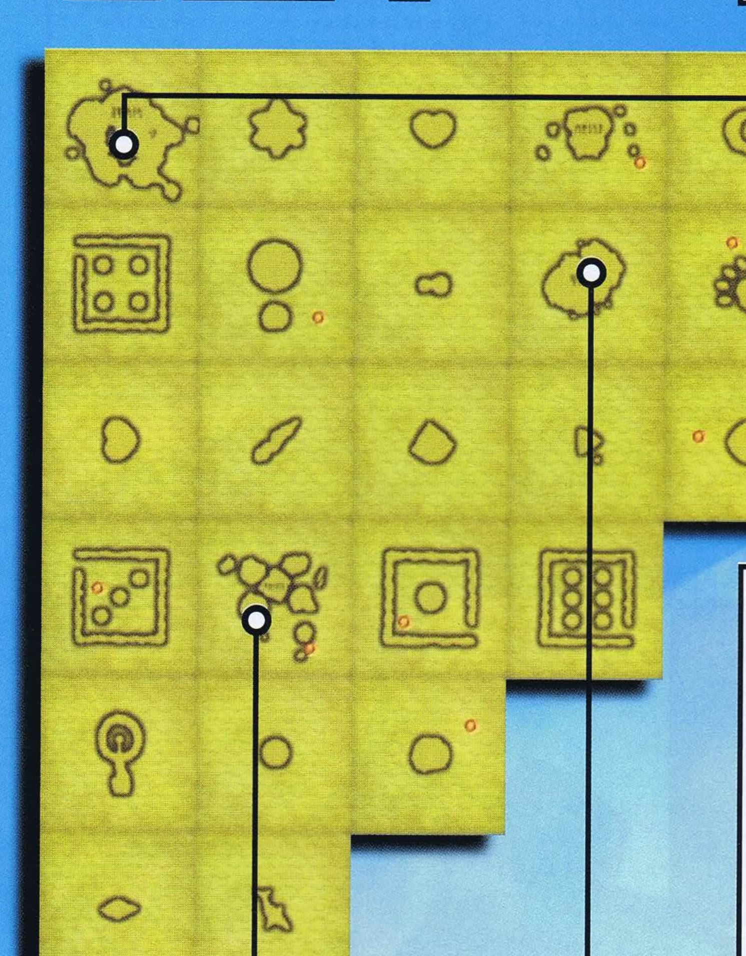
THE GREAT SEA



FORSAKEN FORTRESS

The sinister, benighted base of the evil power responsible for the abduction of Link's sister, Aryll. While Aryll clearly isn't the girl the bad guys are looking for, no blonde, long-eared lasses are safe until this citadel is destroyed.

ITEM OF INTEREST
Skull hammer. Exactly what you need for thumping things that need to be thumped.



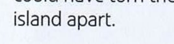
DRAGON ROOST ISLAND

Home to the winged Rito people who act as postmen, flitting between islands. A benevolent dragon watches over the fiery dungeon hidden within the central mountain, and it's the power of his discarded scales that enables the Rito to fly.

ITEM OF INTEREST
Wind Waker. Sail the seas with the greatest of ease.

GREATFISH ISLE

As legend has it, formerly the home of the aquatic Zora race. But something terrible has happened here, and the island lies ruined and lifeless. There's little to do but survey the devastation, and wonder what kind of force could have torn the island apart.



ITEM OF INTEREST
Goron merchant. He features in an intriguing trading sub-quest that will lead you far, far over the ocean.

WINDFALL ISLAND

The only proper trading port in the Great Sea. As the most important town in the area, Windfall is where most goods can be found, side-quests can be located, and information gathered.

ITEM OF INTEREST
The sail. You won't be going anywhere without it.



TOWER OF THE GODS

The biggest structure in the Great Sea – a landmark visible from almost everywhere. The purpose of this giant tower is to provide a true test of courage for those who believe they're worthy. The skulls littering the floors suggest many have failed in the past.

ITEM OF INTEREST
Hero's bow. With this in Link's armoury, new puzzles can be solved and some lesser enemies can be dispatched in the merest blink of an eye.

OUTSET ISLAND

Home to a humble race of subsistence farmers. It's the only land Link has ever seen, and its position right on the edge of unchartered waters means that visits by outsiders are always an event to get excited about. This is where a family tragedy forces Link to become an unlikely hero. A bit like Luke Skywalker, you know.

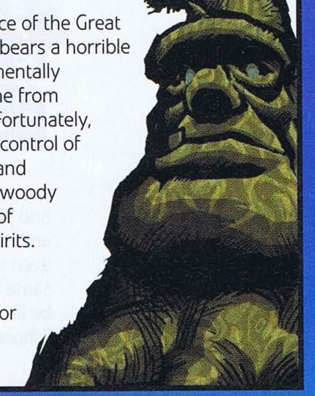
ITEM OF INTEREST
The sword. Without this piece of equipment, no evil-doers are going to taste the cold steel of justice.

PRIVATE OASIS

Even heroes need to take a break from time to time. This island paradise is the perfect place to sip cocktails by the pool or smash expensive vases in the luxurious cabaña. You need ID before you'll be allowed inside – they don't let just any old riff-raff in here.

ITEM OF INTEREST
Money! And loads of it. This place absolutely reeks of lots and lots of lovely old rupees.

FOREST HAVEN



Musty old resting place of the Great Deku Tree, who now bears a horrible resemblance to the mentally challenged warp stone from Starfox Adventures. Fortunately, Mr Deku is still in full control of his ancient marbles, and presides over both a woody dungeon and a race of adorable little tree spirits.

ITEM OF INTEREST
Deku Leaf. Essential for floating on the wind, and other things.

TRAVELLING COMPANIONS

Just a few of the countless characters you'll meet along the way…



DISCO DUDE

Dressed to impress. This gyrating fool is the man who can teach you the song that turns day into night, which is useful if you're afraid of the dark.



SHOWMAN

This guy's a star. He runs a couple of simple minigames, which are among the few places to spend your rupees before Tingle starts extorting cash.



THE KILLER BEES

The spiritual successors to the gang of Bombers from Majora's Mask. Theirs is a smaller role, but they open the way to the most important sub-quest.



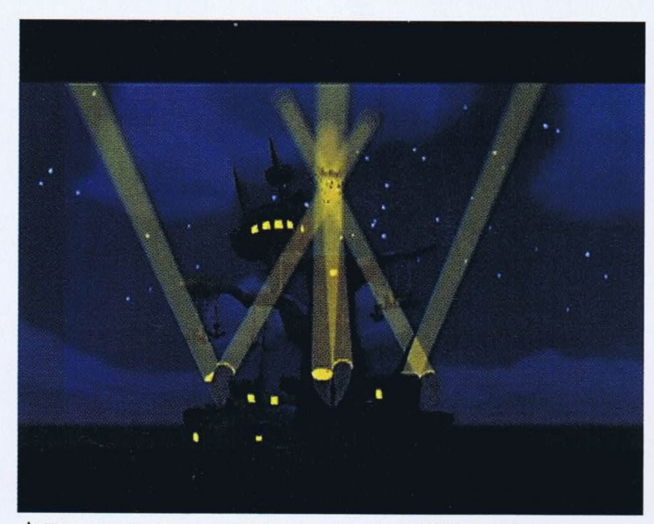
MISS TETRA

The tomboyish leader of the world's least scary pirates. She's sharp-witted, and gets some great one-liners that put Link firmly in his place.



PRINCESS ZELDA

Well, it wouldn't be a Legend without her. To copy her new look, insert a bicycle pump in your nostril and inflate until head achieves desired rotundity.



▲ The Forsaken Fortress. Holiday apartments available at discount rates.





▲ You'll never forget your time in *Wind Waker* – the mark of a great game.



▲ The eyes have it. If there's something interesting nearby, Link always looks towards it. If you get stuck, rotate the camera so you can see the pixie boy's face and, more often than not, you'll get a useful hint.

and folklore.

On a certain island, there's a tradition that to celebrate their coming of age, boys must wear the green garb of the Hero – to celebrate their heritage. For one day only, of course, but having to don a green tunic and pointy hat can be a serious embarrassment to an adolescent lad, even if some mythical Hero wore the same thing centuries before. It would be like children here having to go to school dressed as King Arthur, or something.

> **"THERE'S A TRADITION THAT TO CELEBRATE THEIR COMING OF AGE, BOYS MUST WEAR THE GREEN GARB OF THE HERO…"**

Fortunately for our new Link, there's barely time to receive a good kicking before his sister Aryll is snatched away by a giant bird – in a bizarre case of mistaken identity. And, lucky for him, he gets to escape the dressing-up malarkey and sails off to rescue her in the company of a band of pirates. Still dressed in green, of course.

So it's a new era, a new location, and, of course, a different star for *Legend of Zelda*. And it seems that the game's authors have wrapped up the previous titles and consigned them to history, at least for the time being.

And we can confirm that, after a brief period of acclimatisation, the change has done *Zelda* a world of good.



LINGO

Some characters speak Hylian and, if you look in the instruction manual for the Japanese version, you'll find a chart for translating it. It's Japanese with a different set of symbols. This part of the game hasn't been translated since there's no conversion chart in our version.

JOKING ASIDE

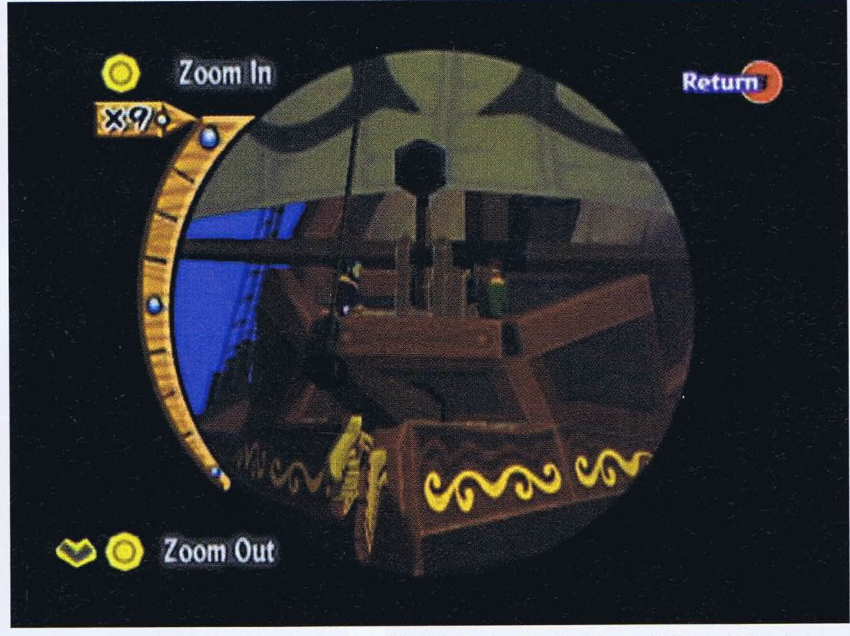
What's immediately noticeable (after the the astonishing graphics, of course) is that this is the gentlest, most light-hearted and humorous *Zelda* to date. It isn't afraid to poke fun at various characters, and even Nintendo, and yet when it's time to get serious *Wind Waker* can still play with your emotions as deftly as *Ocarina* ever did.

Along with some quality script-writing, the reason for this is a visual style that's simply out of this world. While some games strive for realism,

A load of hot air, or a pixie-perfect work of art?



△ Minigame time! This one's all about high-speed boat control, which is fun.



△ He had to taste the deck, and many other things, he had to pay the piper with his wedding ring.



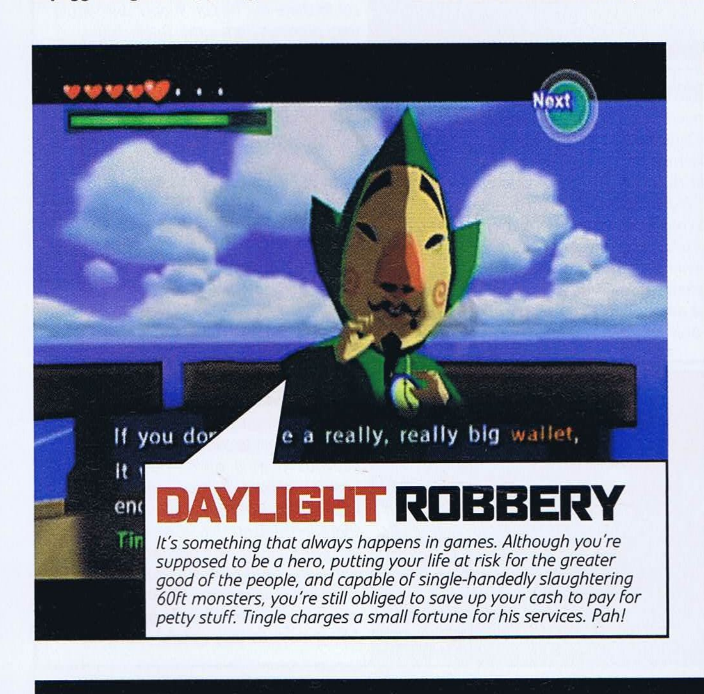
△ You can throw this spinning attack into a combo by rotating the stick.



△ Successive hits produce a tuneful arpeggio. Fight well, young Link.



△ Barrels. These ones are for smashing, others are for hiding inside.



DAYLIGHT ROBBERY

It's something that always happens in games. Although you're supposed to be a hero, putting your life at risk for the greater good of the people, and capable of single-handedly slaughtering 60ft monsters, you're still obliged to save up your cash to pay for petty stuff. Tingle charges a small fortune for his services. Pah!



△ Administering a beating. Good work, son.

and many are basically higher resolution versions of what's gone before, *Wind Waker* rewrites the rules.

This isn't because it's the most technically incredible thing ever, or that it runs at a perfect 60fps – it isn't, and it doesn't. More that it is simply alive with visual eloquence. Everything moves with an organic fluidity – from small details like the soft swaying grass, to more complicated stuff like the rubber-lipped animation of the Moblin guards.

The characters' facial expressions, particularly Link's, are priceless, and as good as those in any hand-drawn cartoon. In fact, it's sometimes hard to believe that this is just a console game, because nothing has ever looked quite like this before.

But the brave new direction doesn't quite extend to the gameplay. Anyone who has played *Ocarina* or *Majora's Mask* will be instantly at home with the controls, which are essentially identical to the N64 titles. There's an air of familiarity about many of the puzzles, and *Zelda* veterans will know exactly how to beat 80 per cent of most dungeons, long before the procedures have been painstakingly explained.



GO, GULL

Buy a special pear from any merchant ship, found near many islands, and you can take control of a seagull for a scout around the immediate area. Some puzzles also require a bit of birdy action for hitting distant switches. Best of all it doesn't matter if the gull gets mauled by a predator.

INSPIRATION

Yet there are enough moments of genuine inspiration to make this a worthy successor to *Ocarina*.

The combat system, which was excellent in the old days, is

"They look genuinely upset that some little kid is giving them a hiding"



Δ This place looks hot. Particle effects all over the place (tech fans) and a tiny bit of slowdown.



Δ Tingle Island. You'll grow to despise this forsaken residence of *Wind Waker*'s pervert.



Δ Link's all-new Hurricane Spin attack. It takes quite a while to power up, so it's of little use against enemies who rush to attack you. But it's loads of fun to use against multiple targets.

TINGLING SENSATION

The disturbingly attired wannabe fairy is back with a vengeance...

FAIR-Y WEATHER FRIENDS

Since Navi is no longer around to guide Link through puzzles, and provide important information during the quest, the hints and tips throughout the game are supplied by alternative sources. First up, there are the pirates. Miss Tetra gives Link a special pendant through which, by some mystical technique, she can talk directly into the lad's brain. Her info tends to be of the blindingly obvious variety. Link really needs to find a Navi substitute.



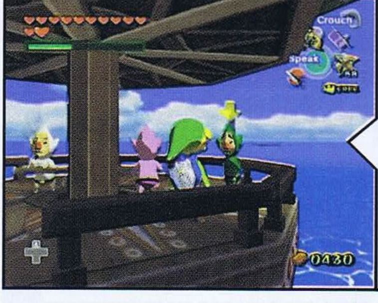
I AM REBORN

Luckily, there's a blast from the past waiting to be rescued on Windfall Island. Tingle is the name – you might remember him as the map-making fool who dangled from balloons and sold handy charts in Majora's Mask. This time, he isn't so innocent. The townsfolk have thrown him in jail after he was caught thieving from the local shops. Normally he'd be left to rot in there but he can supply Link with a very precious item – the Tingle Tuner.

TURN ON, TUNE IN

You need a GBA and a link cable to use it, but it's well worth bothering with. Once you're tuned in to Tingle's signal, a second player makes an effective replacement for Navi. The GBA screen shows dungeon and ocean maps, and the other player moves a little cursor over points of interest. It's the only way to find out about enemy names and weaknesses. And, if you're really poor at the game, Tingle can supply potions, lift Link over chasms, and find hidden chests.





YOU DISGUSTING LITTLE MAN

Just don't forget who it is you're 'talking' to when you cop some advice. He's a babygro-wearing, middle-aged man who honestly believes he's a fairy. He lives on a barren island, in the middle of the most shark-infested stretch of ocean. He has two gimp slaves, also dressed in romper suits, who have been surgically altered to resemble their master. All day they toil under the hot sun while Tingle watches. And loves it. Be very careful young lad.



now in a league of its own. It isn't *Soul Calibur* in terms of complexity or difficulty, but you'll be hard pressed to get this amount of fun from anything else.

There's now a parry move, for dodging and counter-attacking, but the biggest change from previous games is the degree of artificial intelligence on display, and the way it's tailored to make this an enjoyable experience, rather than an overly difficult one.

You can really toy with the enemies during a scrap; knock their weapons out of their hands, remove their armour piece by piece, or bamboozle them with a dazzling display of swordsmanship. And as you tease them, they begin to look genuinely upset that some little kid is giving them a good hiding.

The piglike Moblins really hate getting disarmed, and the giant armoured knights fly into a rage when disrobed. You'll find that these guys are also keen on a spot of fisticuffs, squaring up to Link like Victorian boxers to try and get their own back.

You can also use lots of weapons other than the standard sword. Grab something your opponent dropped, if you want to experiment with spiked clubs or huge pikes. Use the bow or the boomerang to fight from a distance, and you can even pick the enemy's pockets using the grappling hook!

It's what videogame fighting should be all about – a genuine pleasure to perform, rather than a one-dimensional, *Starfox*-style chore.

The game's designers are obviously well aware of what a gem they've created here, as there are countless sequences where you face off against huge numbers of increasingly tough enemies.

ANIMAL TRAGIC

Outset Island isn't the paradise it first appears to be. Life can be harsh when you're marooned in the middle of an endless shark-infested ocean…



STARVING SNOT BOY

One of Outset Island's many harmless residents. He'll leave a nasty stain on your tunic, but otherwise he's a nice little guy.



MRS BUTCHER

Just a short distance up the hillside lives this pleasant lady. She obviously can't afford washing powder for her apron.



PIGGY IN THE MIDDLE

The lady wants a cute little piglet as a pet for her son. Luckily there are plenty of wild ones foraging in the island's fields.



A JOB WELL DONE

"Thank you, young man! Thank you ever so much! Now would you mind finding me some more? You know, for my other sons."



STRANGE, BUT…

The lady's yard is fully stocked with piglets. Hope she doesn't let them play in the house, with all these sharp implements around.



OH MY WORD

A few weeks later, it's time to return to a hero's welcome and see how those porkers are getting on in their new home.



HOW CAN THIS BE?

There's only one left, and it's enormous! What strange witchcraft is this? Where in the world have those cute piglets run away to?



CANNIBALS!

Snot Boy ate them! Mrs Butcher carved them up, her husband put them in the pot, and the giant porker feasted on their bones.



GET ME OUT OF HERE

Battling evil, without food or water, makes you forget that the rest of the world needs sustenance. Here endeth the lesson.

NGC FIELD OF PLAY

Wherever you may roam, on land or sea or foam...

SOLID GROUND

There aren't a great many places that you can explore above ground. But small islands sometimes hold giant cave systems, you just need to find a hidden passageway.

ALL AT SEA

Follow the ocean map to locate the islands where dungeons, puzzles and secret rooms await the bravest, and least seasick, adventurers.

△ **Beware the sticky monsters!**

Amazingly, it doesn't get dull. Fighting enemies at sea is a different matter, because of the clunky handling of the boat when its sails are down. Luckily, most aquatic hazards are easily avoidable, but compared to the horseback parts of the previous games it's a poor show.

ANCIENT MARINER

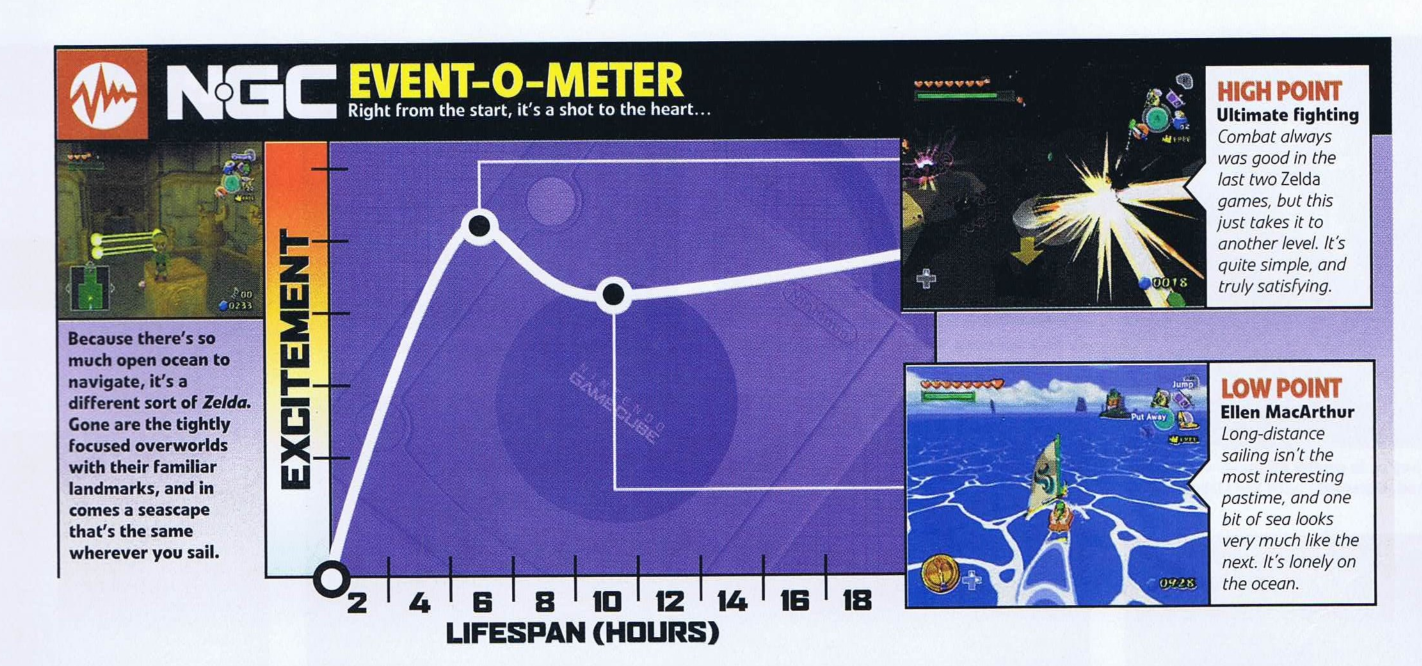
There's a lot of sailing to be done in *Wind Waker*. A huge amount, in fact. And if like us, to begin with, you don't manage to locate the technique to warp across the ocean very early on in the game, don't worry. There are many occasions when you can simply point the boat in the right direction, then go off and make yourself some tea and toast while Link sails the vast distance to your next objective.

And the good old chap will still be sailing by the time you get back.

The boating stuff isn't hugely exciting, despite Nintendo's best efforts to spice it up by scattering treasure all over the place. And that's a real shame, given the amount of time you'll find yourself having to spend on the wide blue ocean.

There's also the problem of controlling the wind. Unfortunately the boat can't sail directly into it, which means that if you speed past something interesting or just miss the entrance to a cave, you'll have to go through the rigmarole of changing the wind direction, and then watching the resulting cut-scene, before you can have another go.

And when you consider that some of the game's 49 islands are little more than rocky outcrops holding a single bonus item, it does seem like this is the



Because there's so much open ocean to navigate, it's a different sort of *Zelda*. Gone are the tightly focused overworlds with their familiar landmarks, and in comes a seascape that's the same wherever you sail.

HIGH POINT
Ultimate fighting
Combat always was good in the last two Zelda games, but this just takes it to another level. It's quite simple, and truly satisfying.

LOW POINT
Ellen MacArthur
Long-distance sailing isn't the most interesting pastime, and one bit of sea looks very much like the next. It's lonely on the ocean.



△ To be honest, this early stealth section isn't the greatest ever beginning for a *Zelda* game.



△ Ahh, the pleasure of a good sword fight.



△ Your boat is called King of Red Lions. That's because he looks like a red lion. And he talks. Okay?

smallest, shallowest *Zelda* to date.

LAND AHOY

But the more time we've spent exploring the vastness of the ocean, interacting with the characters on dry land, and exploring the many bonus quests, the more we're inclined to think that it's exactly the game it should have been – neither too long-winded or disappointingly brief. You could easily rattle through it in under 20 hours, and the fact that you're offered a new save slot for a second play-through (with minor differences) suggests that it's a throwaway sort of game – something *Zelda* has never been in the past.

It's easy to spot at least one area where an entire dungeon has been removed, due to time constraints, so the final tally is a meagre five. Which, as we mentioned earlier, you probably won't have much trouble completing.

But if you take the time to appreciate everything on offer, you'll be drawn into an experience as unforgettable as any of its predecessors.

There are more optional side-quests than in previous titles. Tacked on, perhaps, but still offering a great chance to be guided through the locations and learn more about some of the best characters in any *Zelda* game. Having beaten the final challenge – possibly the best *Zelda* moment ever – we returned to locate every piece of treasure and do the sub-quests, before looking at the stunning finale again.

With that in mind, a 20-hour game is suddenly looking more like 40 hours. Forty spectacular, unforgettable hours in one of the richest, most beautiful gaming worlds ever created.

That's worth a quid an hour of anyone's money. And for those of you lucky enough not to have had the newness of *Wind Waker* spoiled by familiarity, well… it's going to be the best thing you've played in years.

MARTIN KITTS

> **"THIS IS FORTY UNFORGETTABLE HOURS TO ENJOY IN ONE OF THE RICHEST, MOST BEAUTIFUL GAMING WORLDS EVER CREATED"**

SNAPPER

Wind Waker features the hugest side-quest of any Zelda title yet. There's a gallery where you earn Smash Bros-style figurines by taking pictures of every single character, and enemy, in the game. The camera holds three shots and there are hundreds of pics to take. It's completely separate from the main game.



- Fantastic storyline.
- Amazing graphics.
- Skillful combat.
- Side quests.



- Not much dry land.
- Small islands.
- Only one big town.
- Fairly easy.



Metroid Prime
Nintendo
NGC/79 97%
It's like one giant *Zelda* dungeon, without all the other bits in between.



10 VISUALS
The only game with added wind. A real stunner to behold.

9 SOUNDS
Zelda themes have never sounded better than this.

10 MASTERY
Excellent GBA mode, perfect control, and smart fighting.

8 LIFESPAN
Like most truly great games, you'll finish it before you want to.

VERDICT

***Ocarina* on the high seas. Its flaws are more than made up for by the quality of the story and the plentiful variety of gameplay. Essential.**



97

"£30 each? The very definition of daylight robbery"



Δ Horrific beasties ahoy! They're in grainy PSone-o-vision, but there are still shocks to be had. Especially with the Licker.



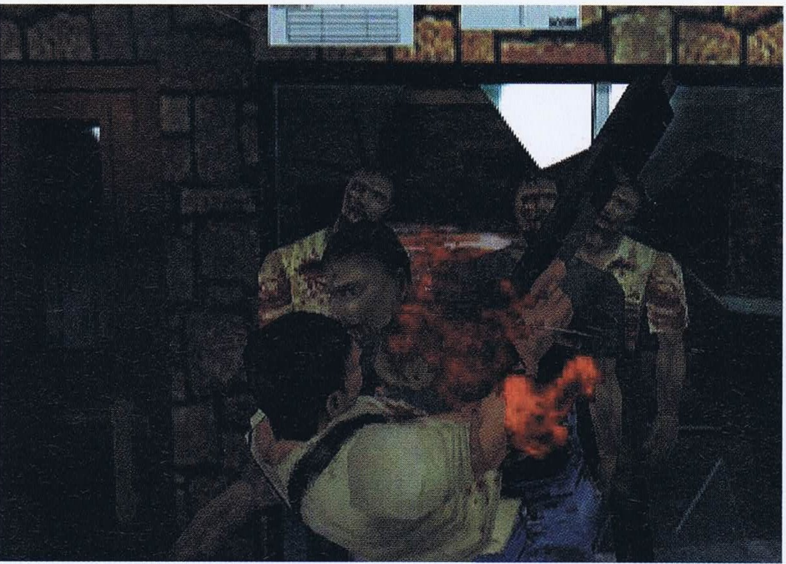
Δ He's not dead, he's A STINKING ZOMBIE!



Δ The police station. Not many cops about.



Δ *Resident Evil 1* has a giant snake. This has an enormous croc.



Δ Early on in the game, this unfortunate shopkeeper gets his brain munched. Poor little man.



- Still a decent game.
- Brilliant music.
- Two characters available to play as.



- A straight, and hurried, port of an ancient PSone game.
- £30! £30! £30!



Resident Evil Zero
Capcom
NGC/78 85%
The latest *Resident Evil*, and it looks astonishing. A real treat indeed.



4 VISUALS
Lest we forget, this is a PSone game with a higher resolution.

8 SOUNDS
The soundtrack remains eerie and excellent. Top stuff.

4 MASTERY
Two PSone discs on a single tiny GC one, but it's all so old it creaks.

6 LIFESPAN
Challenging the first time around, with two characters to play as.

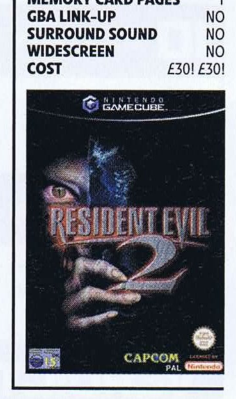
VERDICT
Old, draughty, graphically arthritic and none too cheap, this is nonetheless a classic slice of survival horror. But do you want to play it again?





INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	CAPCOM
DEVELOPER	CAPCOM
RELEASE DATE	30TH MAY
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	1
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£30! £30!



RESIDENT EVIL 2

Back from the dead! Capcom resurrect their own shambling zombie in the form of this golden oldie…

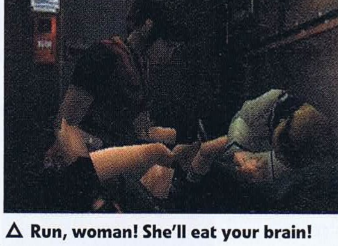
It's hard to be completely objective about the two *Resident Evils* reviewed on these pages. On the one hand, these are hurriedly-ported PSone games (PSone!), complete with *unforgivable* slowdown and quaint antediluvian graphics. And you can pick them up cheaper in their original format than buying these slightly-higher-resolution versions for the Cube. Hell, you could probably pick them up cheaper with a PSone bundled in. On the other hand, despite their age and their obvious deficiencies, they're still quality games that are, crucially, a lot of hair-raising fun.

But let's face it, you're going to be initially disappointed by these games. It's a different matter when you're deep into playing them, though, as you will adapt to the blocky visuals and, ultimately, we think the Cube is better off for having Capcom knock these out, as they're two titles that are well worth playing if you haven't before. But they do look like cave paintings next to *Resi Zero*'s Sistine Chapel. And £30 each? The very definition of daylight robbery. You could probably get *Zero* for that now, given all the price-cutting that's been going on.

"THEY'RE WELL WORTH PLAYING, BUT THEY DO LOOK LIKE CAVE PAINTINGS NEXT TO RESI ZERO"

Anyhow, you'll have played *Resident Evil 2* before, both on the PSone and the superior N64 port, which offered 'proper' analogue control. This iteration offers a halfway system, like the *Resi* remake, which works just fine. And both walk and run are amply catered for on the R-trigger.

The game itself, memorably, starts in the flaming ruins of Racoon city then relocates to the Police Station, before descending to the inevitable underground Umbrella research facility. While the game arguably lacks the tension created by the 'old dark house' mentality of the first game, there are still some delicious shocks to be had (such as the Licker's first appearance), even if everything that irritates about *Resident Evil* – the doors, the puzzles, and so on – are here in all their glory.



Δ Run, woman! She'll eat your brain!

Not the best entry into the series, and not the worst, this remains good fun, but, well… £30?

JES BICKHAM

WEAPONRY
Hoo-ha! You start off with a machine gun and it just gets better. Watch those zombies jerk and bleed. And then try out the Magnum…

CITY
It's really quite atmospheric roaming Raccoon City. You'll even get to visit the Police Station from Resident Evil 2, *exploring new areas of it, as this takes place hours after the previous game.*

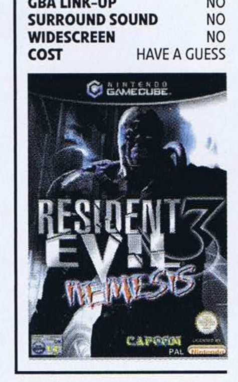
LIVE SELECTION
At crucial moments, you'll be given a choice of things to do. It's probably best to run away from Nemesis, if you've got the chance.

Fight with the monster.
Enter the police station.

NEMESIS!
Frankly pant-wetting, um, nemesis. Unstoppable and constantly pursuing you, he's a right pain in the neck. Doesn't like S.T.A.R.S. too much.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	CAPCOM
DEVELOPER	CAPCOM
RELEASE DATE	MAY 30TH
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	1
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	HAVE A GUESS



RESIDENT EVIL 3 NEMESIS

In Friends-speak, it's The One With All The Guns.

Resident Evil is a series that has evolved slowly, if at all. The eye-caressing *Resi* remake and *Resi Zero* are gorgeous, brilliant games, but they're still fundamentally the same as the one that first terrified PSone owners way back in, ooh, 1736.

Nemesis is arguably the one game in the series that tried to move things forward a little. It may have taken baby steps as opposed to giant strides, but it nevertheless injected little additions and asides that make it an intriguing addition to the series.

For a start, it's rather more action-packed than the first two games. Brooding dread is jettisoned for actual panic (the titular Nemesis can't be killed until later in the game, and has a nasty habit of chasing you constantly, breaking through windows and doors and generally causing heart palpitations), and you're given a huge amount of ammo at the start of the game – as well as mixing herbs, you can also use gunpowder to make your own munitions. It's certainly a more ordnance-based *Resi* than the rest, and is correspondingly easier, as the zombies drop like ninepins to automatic weaponry. There are also the Live Selections, on-screen prompts that offer you a decision, the response to which dictates which route you'll be taking through the game.

But it's the tiny control tweaks that really add to the experience. It's here that the quick turn is first implemented, and there's also, joyously, a dodge move and the ability to wriggle free of a beastie's grasp (a little like the defensive items in the remake). Quite why these were ignored for the Dreamcast follow-up, *Code Veronica*, is a mystery.


△ Compare this to *Resident Evil Zero.* Doesn't look so good now, huh?

Ultimately, *Nemesis* is, in our opinion, the superior game to *Resident Evil 2*. It's in some ways a lot sillier – Nemesis carries a rocket launcher, which brings to mind Samuel Johnson's dog walking on its hind legs – but it's more gripping and much more tense. Of course, the cautions on the previous page still stand, as even though this is a lot of fun, it is an awfully expensive nostalgia trip. If you're flush, though, it's perhaps one worth taking.

JES BICKHAM



- One of the best *Resident Evils*.
- Really quite tense indeed.



- It certainly looks its age.
- We'll say it again – £30! Sheesh.



Resident Evil
Capcom
NGC/72 89%
An astonishing refit of a truly scary game. A Gamecube must-own.



5 VISUALS
Marginally better than *Resident Evil 2* but still aged.

8 SOUNDS
The soundtrack is creepy and brilliantly atmospheric.

4 MASTERY
See the Gamecube try to imitate the ancient PSone!



Fairly substantial, and worth replaying due to the Live Selections.

VERDICT
Like *Resident Evil 2*, this looks almost laughably primitive. But there's a great game behind the cobwebs and chunky, blocky zombies.






THE LEGEND OF
ZELDA®
the Wind Waker™



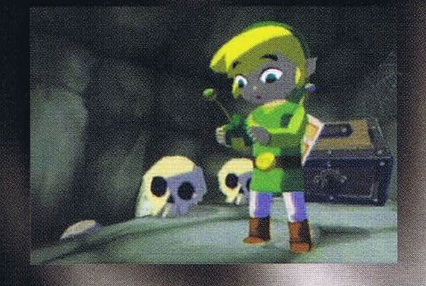
"GameCube's crowning glory
is one of the finest
video games ever created."
NOM 10/10.

"Perfect. Gaming elevated to the form of fine art.
A masterful achievement
from the greatest game designer working today."
Gamesmaster 97%.

"This is why we play Nintendo.
The Wind Waker is an utter delight for both the mind
and the senses to wallow in."
NGC 96%.







LIMITED EDITION
GAME SET

INCLUDES BONUS DISC FEATURING

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME

AND NEVER BEFORE RELEASED

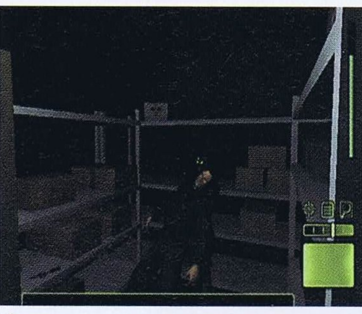
MASTER QUEST

STRICTLY WHILE STOCKS LAST

"The world listens to the bulletins that cover up your actions"



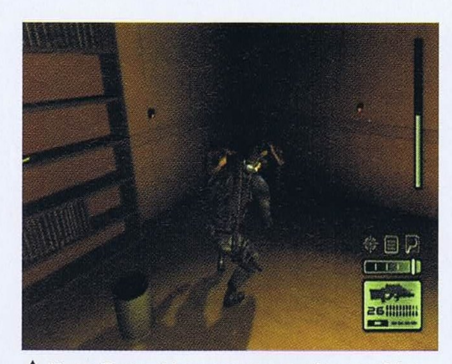
△ The first half of the oil rig level is mostly made up of jumping and climbing. You get to shoot people later on.



△ Once you've grabbed someone, they're yours to toy with as you please...



△ Time your shuffling so you won't be seen.



△ Hmm. Trapped between two motion-sensitive wall mines, eh? See you later, then...



△ Night vision helps you see through smoke as well as night – clever, that.



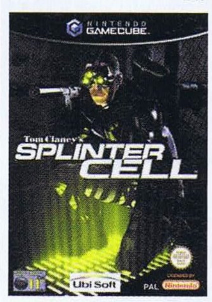
△ Gun turrets are nasty. Unless you hack them and turn them on your enemies. Then they rule.

SPLINTER CELL

Creep show! The one-time Xbox exclusive arrives on the Gamecube – and we're here to welcome it with open arms...

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	UBI SOFT
DEVELOPER	UBI SOFT
RELEASE DATE	6TH JUNE
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	17
GBA LINK-UP	YES
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40



GET INTO THE GAME

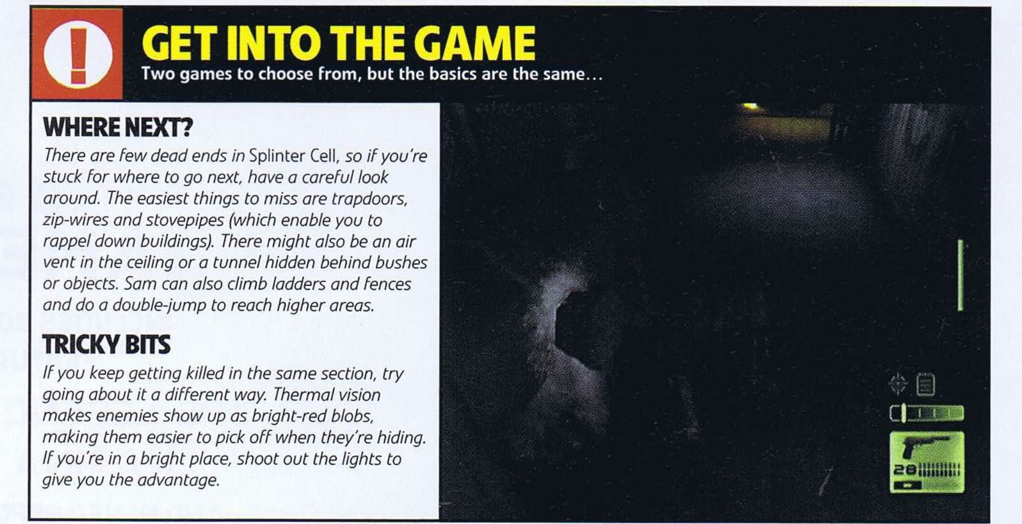
Two games to choose from, but the basics are the same...

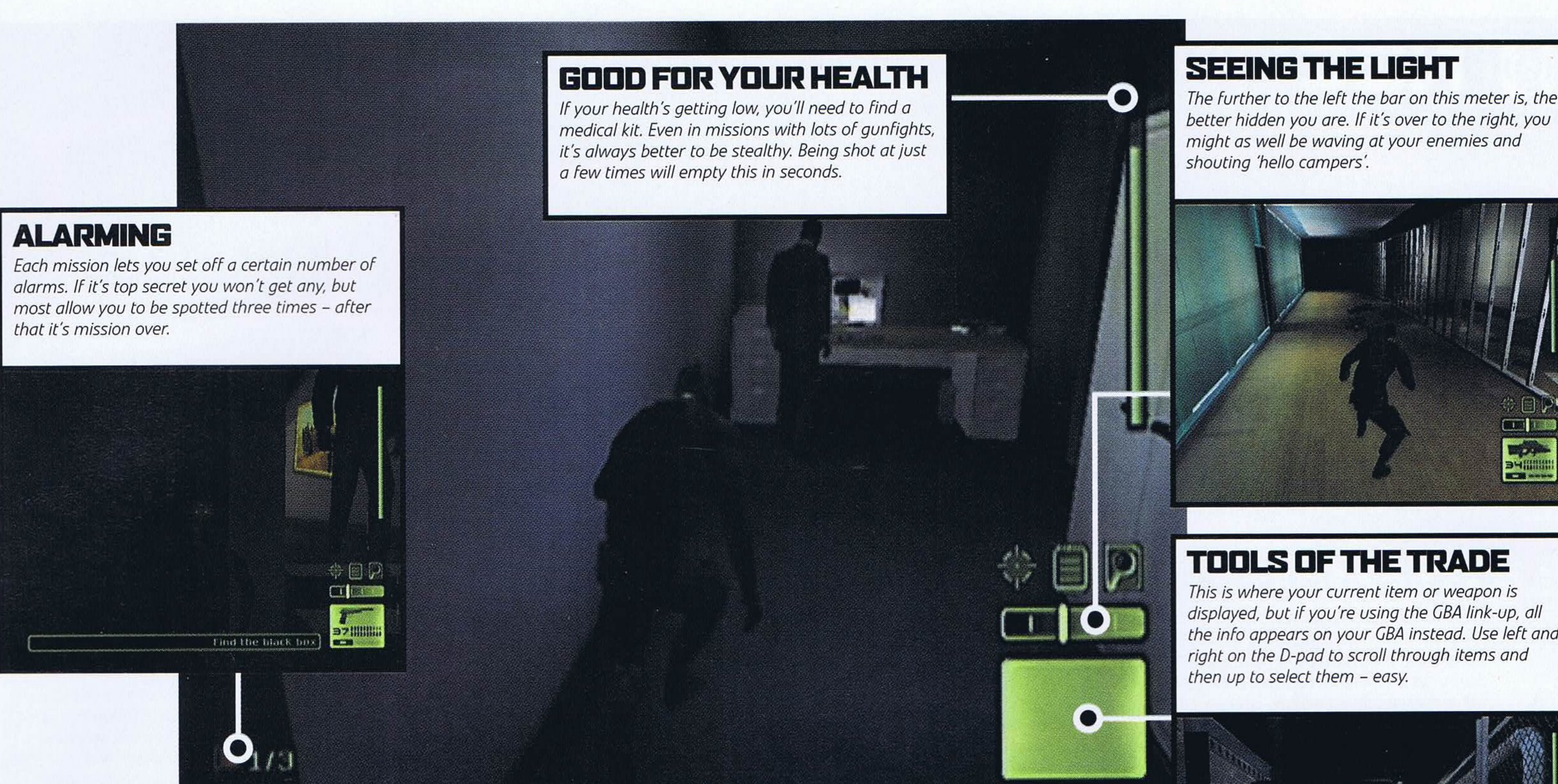
WHERE NEXT?

There are few dead ends in Splinter Cell, so if you're stuck for where to go next, have a careful look around. The easiest things to miss are trapdoors, zip-wires and stovepipes (which enable you to rappel down buildings). There might also be an air vent in the ceiling or a tunnel hidden behind bushes or objects. Sam can also climb ladders and fences and do a double-jump to reach higher areas.

TRICKY BITS

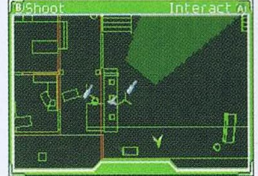
If you keep getting killed in the same section, try going about it a different way. Thermal vision makes enemies show up as bright-red blobs, making them easier to pick off when they're hiding. If you're in a bright place, shoot out the lights to give you the advantage.





TWO BECOME ONE

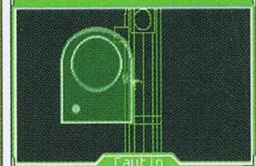
A linked-up GBA becomes your very own handy gadget...



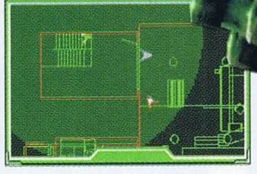
The GBA displays a radar no other console version of Splinter Cell has. You can hide Sam somewhere, then use it to scan the surrounding area.



Not only is it a handy radar. With the GBA, you get an exclusive weapon: the Sticky Bomb. This will stick to anything or anyone and can be remotely detonated.



Some levels feature wall mines, which explode if you walk too close. The key is to creep over and deactivate them, which can also be done using the GBA.


Enemies show up as coloured arrows. Red arrows are alive enemies, black dead ones, dark red are sparked-out baddies and yellows are neutral characters.



With *Metal Gear Solid* still lacking a release date on Gamecube, stealth fans have been losing hope for decent espionage thrills. Still, it never rains and all that. A definite release date for the so-called daddy of stealth Solid Snake is expected at E3. In the meantime, we've got *Splinter Cell* to keep us occupied.

As you'd expect from a Clancy title, this is a game where realism looms large. Well, 'realism' as perceived by Clancy, at any rate. You are Sam Fisher, an operative for a secret branch of the NSA. He could be, y'know, real. And in true Tom Clancy style, every gadget is authentic – or at least a prototype of something authentic.

While you go about each secret mission, spying on terrorists, hacking into computers, recording conversations and 'eliminating' suspects, the world is listening to the news bulletins that cover up your actions. The fire you cause in the Chinese Embassy by setting off wall mines is put down to a gas explosion, and the murder of a dictator is credited to the US army.

The sense of being in some scary real-world situation is always present – and not just in the cut-scenes. In terms of the stealth aspect, there's no on-screen radar to show where enemies are looking. Instead, *Splinter Cell* uses



WHAT THE...?

If enemies just catch a glimpse of you or spot movement in the shadows, they'll carry out a half-hearted search. But if they get a good look at you, they won't give up so easily – and if they're armed, they'll start firing. Unarmed foes will either radio for help, set off the alarms or just run away and hide somewhere.

> **"SPLINTER CELL USES LIGHT AND SHADOW TO DETERMINE WHETHER YOU'RE VISIBLE. IT'S A FEATURE THAT WORKS WELL"**



DID YOU KNOW? NSA supercomputers scan millions of emails every day looking for words like 'kill' and 'Bush'. Titchmarsh better watch out...

"There's always more than one solution to a problem"

NGC FIELD OF PLAY

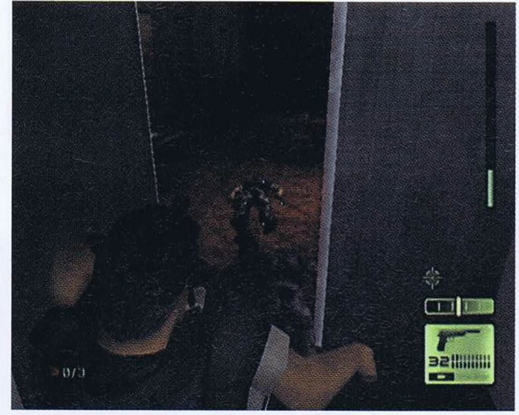
Sam has deep pockets full of lots of clever gadgets…

CREATE A DIVERSION

The diversion camera will stick to any surface you fire it at. You then get to see what it can see and can pan from left to right. Once you've set your lens on a target, pressing X will make the camera whistle, luring enemies close. Finally, pressing Y unleashes some poisonous gas that knocks out the curious enemy – genius.

VIEWS TO A KILL

Sam has many handy visual gimmicks. Thermal vision lets you see through objects such as hedges or roofs (so you can take bad guys by surprise). And sliding the optic cable underneath a door gives you a preview of what to expect…



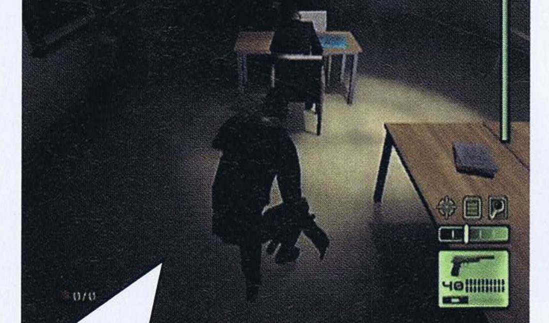
△ Get yourself a hostage and enemies will either back off or keep firing. Either way, the hostage acts as a useful shield.



△ One of Sam's sneaky pistol-using techniques – shooting at people from around corners. Coward.



△ Hiding behind doors is a good tactic. You can usually sneak in through the open door before they turn around.



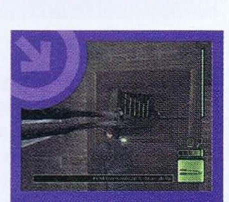
SILENT & DEADLY

You'll never tire of pulling off a perfect stealth attack. There's a lot of satisfaction to be gained from creeping up behind someone, and smacking him before he squeals.

light and shadow to determine whether you're visible – a feature that works well, because it means you can rely on your own common sense to guide you. If you stand under a light, anyone you can see can see you. If you're hidden, start fidgeting and your enemies will sense movement and investigate. Seek out the very dark areas though, and you'll be able to creep closely past them without detection. It's a very natural and immersive way of getting through each mission and once you're used to staying in the shadows, you instinctively seek them out, to the extent that you start panicking when the game forces you to cross large, brightly lit areas.

There's no denying that each level is very linear in terms of the path you can take, but that doesn't apply when it comes to actually getting past people and obstacles. There's always more than one solution to a problem, though certain methods are usually better in this respect than others. Missions are broken down into bite-sized checkpoints, each one containing a few rooms or puzzles to get through. Sam has plenty of techniques at his disposal – he can chuck bottles to distract enemies from their posts, sneak up

> **"IN TRUE TOM CLANCY STYLE, EVERY GADGET IS AUTHENTIC – OR AT LEAST A PROTOTYPE OF SOMETHING AUTHENTIC"**



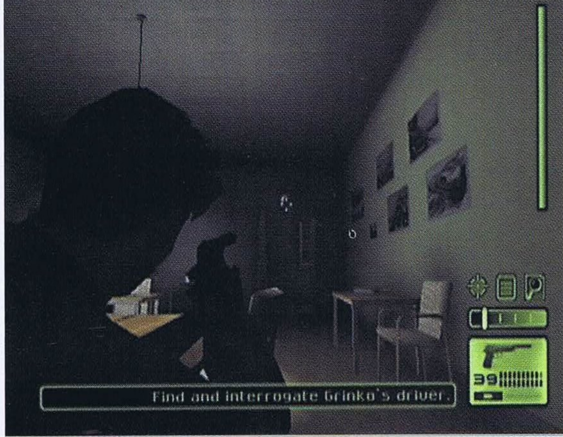
GLORIOUS GADGETS

This game is a gadget-fiend's dream, and that's not including the GBA link-up features. The best of the bunch is the optical cable, which can be slipped underneath doors, allowing you to see what's waiting on the other side. Then there's the lockpick – you rotate the analogue stick to work it. It's a tense and frantic task when you're in a hurry.



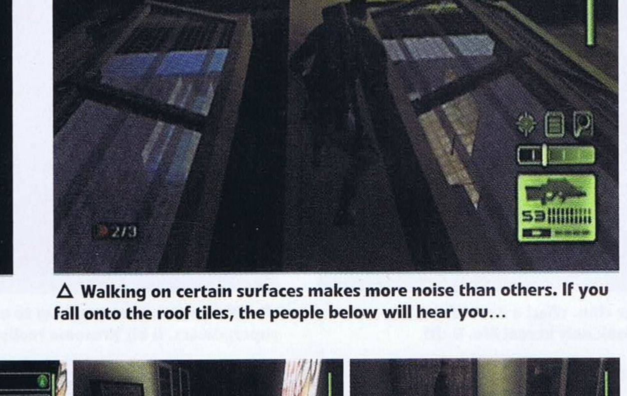
△ **Hacking into computers is a good way to find out door codes and useful info.**

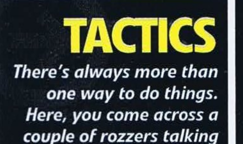

△ **A corpse! You could just leave it there to decompose, or carry it to a safer place.**



△ **Damn pesky security cameras. Some can be destroyed, but others are heavily armoured. Which means using the old stealth skills.**


△ **Just get a load of those classy lighting effects. *Splinter Cell* is chock-full of this kind of snazzy graphical witchcraft, and it all moves at a (fairly) reasonable frame-rate too.**



△ **Walking on certain surfaces makes more noise than others. If you fall onto the roof tiles, the people below will hear you…**



TACTICS

There's always more than one way to do things. Here, you come across a couple of rozzers talking to a drunk. You could smash the bottle to distract them, or just shimmy past like so…





behind people then silently knock them out, and even set traps using wall mines and gun turrets. The projectile-launching gun you pick up later in the game opens up even more options, letting you use gadgets such as the Diversion Camera and the Sticky Shocker, each suitable for different situations. It's rare that the game ever forces you to backtrack through areas or search for things – if you're stuck, it's generally just a case of looking for a zip-wire or air vent to progress. Certainly, the boundaries of the game are set right from the off. You'll never feel cheated that Sam can grab some walls but not others, or only fit through certain holes – everything is consistent.

Well, more or less. *Splinter Cell* plays a good hand when it comes to pulling the wool over your eyes most of the time, but there are plenty of aspects that spoil the illusion, too. For example, it's often too easy not to bother finding a cunning way through certain levels and just hide in the dark, picking off all the bad guys. You can lay false trails for guard dogs, but why bother when you can just electrocute the stupid mutts and put them out of action permanently? And instead of skillfully avoiding spotlights, you can just shoot them out with a silenced pistol.

I SEE DEAD PEOPLE

The hiding of bodies also feels somewhat arbitrary. Alarms are set off when one is found, but it seems the only rule for hiding corpses is that they need to be in the dark. The middle of a shady walkway is okay, but the top of an illuminated, but totally deserted roof isn't. It's a bit of a wake-up call from an otherwise highly believable experience.

And with all the endless stealthing, there's the tiniest chance that – shock! – you might just get bored with *Splinter Cell* before the end. Each level is varied, certainly, and there are always new tricks and techniques to try out right up to the end. But the core of the game is always creeping around and sniping, which can get tedious – a little more mindless blasting might have gone some way to relieve all that tense, nail-biting sneakage.

We've got a feeling that the inevitable sequel will set all these little niggles completely straight, but we're just getting ahead of ourselves. *Splinter Cell* isn't perfect, but it offers the kind of comprehensive stealth experience that's never been done before on any console. It's involving, immersive and introduces new ideas that are carried off with style. Our advice is turn off the lights and forget the sun is shining outside. The dark is definitely the place to be.

KATH BRICE



USING THE FORCE

Many levels feature retinal scanners – you need to watch and observe who has the right retinas, then force that person to co-operate. If you don't know the code to a keypad, waiting for someone to use it, then using thermal vision lets you find out the code by seeing which keys they pressed. Clever stuff.



- Gorgeous lighting.
- Gadgets galore.
- Bags of atmosphere.



- Trial and error.
- Steep learns-curve.
- No replay incentives.



Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon
Ubi Soft
NGC/79 66%
More Clancy than stealth, with top multiplayer action.



8 VISUALS
Lovely lighting let down by jaggies and blurriness.

8 SOUNDS
Great background music that speeds up when you're spotted.

7 MASTERY
Ported from the Xbox – could have been done better.

8 LIFESPAN
Thirty-odd hours' worth of single-player mode.

VERDICT

Stealth done in a totally new, stylish way with shadows and darkness perfectly utilised. You'll enjoy (nearly) every second.






DID YOU KNOW? Intelligence agencies use micro-bots to spy on people. These tiny, remote-control, electronic bugs can fly into your home and have a look around without you even noticing. Aaagh!

"It kept us in cheap jokes for a whole year"


▲ The man of steel wantonly tosses cars around. Doesn't he know that belongs to someone? Honestly, superheroes, eh? Tsk, etc.


▲ Look at his waist. That's not even close to being realistic. Given he first made an appearance in the 40s, you'd expect a saggy old arse and doughy dinnerlady arms. Pfft.

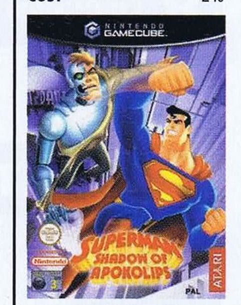

▲ Supes clocks Metallo on the chin. What a beautiful man. Although his costume would look daft in real life. Daft!


▲ This level teaches you how to use your superpowers. A bit tiresome really.


▲ Despite the bland textures, this is nonetheless a stylish little affair.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	INFOGRAMES
DEVELOPER	INFOGRAMES
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	4
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40



SUPERMAN
SHADOW OF APOKOLIPS

Fancy some maze-solving? You're out of luck this time around, as Lex has learned his lesson…

We can't review this game without making reference to the infamous *Superman 64*, a game which not only ranked as one of the worst ever (beaten only by *Carmageddon 64*, fact fans), but also kept us in cheap jokes for a whole year. *Shadow of Apokolips* (cough), although only sporadically fun, is a work of genius in comparison. The big boy scout's reputation has been salvaged.

As it's based on the excellent TV cartoon, *SOA* looks a treat. And it has taken the same visual cues – bold colours and lines wrapped in a tangible Art Deco-based design. Sure, there's little in the way of texture or detail, but the overall effect is nonetheless very pleasing to behold.

This time around, Superman is in full control of his abilities, meaning you can swoop gloriously through Metropolis, explode things with heat vision, ram things like – yes – a speeding bullet, and so on. Great. Unfortunately, the game's controls aren't quite *there*.

For instance, if you want to grapple an enemy, stand next to them and hold A. Only half of the time Supes doesn't want to, and stands idly by as his target blasts away. It's frustrating, although the way the controls have been mapped out to allow you to explore our hero's many abilities is exemplary. The camera's not perfect, either, as it twitches to keep up with the action and does drag a little.

And despite having a giant city to fly around, much of the game revolves around beating up 'Inter-Bots'. While there's rescuing and other activities involved, the constant combat gets tedious and does make up much of the game's sub ten-hour lifespan.

Superman: Shadow of Apokolips gets a lot of things right, though, and initially it's all great fun doing everything Superman can. But it runs out of steam all too soon, and doesn't seem to know what to do with the freedom and abilities that are on offer. Pleasant, but ultimately inconsequential.

JES BICKHAM

+
- Nice style.
- Do everything Superman can!
- Great sound.

–
- Repetitive.
- Short.
- Ultimately all a little bit empty.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Batman Vengeance
Ubi Soft
NGC/67 70%
Similarly cartoon-based videogames superheroics with the caped crusader.

7 VISUALS
Flat, little texture, but well-designed and individual.

7 SOUNDS
Great soundtrack and loads of voice acting from 'proper' actors.

6 MASTERY
Relatively smooth and quick, but there are camera issues.

6 LIFESPAN
You'll probably whizz through it in ten hours and won't come back.

VERDICT

Not as – ha! – super as we'd have liked, this is nonetheless diverting and initially exciting. It also makes up for Superman's dreadful mistakes of the past…

NGC
INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING



"It'll take away a chunk of your life and you won't want it back"



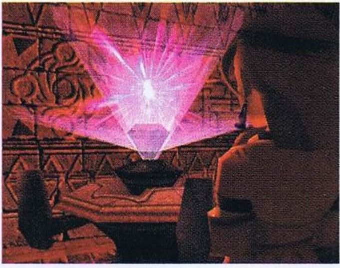
△ You'll get that on-top-of-the-world feeling a lot. Just don't look down…



△ Bosses like the Rokwyrm can be huge hurdles if your level's not high enough.



△ When you read statements like that, it's best to hit Guard just as soon as you get the chance.



△ The crux of the matter – Moonstones are the source of the world's energy.



△ Heart of darkness – Valua's upper and lower levels are overlooked by the palace.

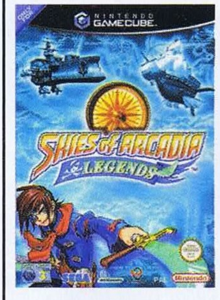
SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS

Surely have the stat-gods have answered our prayers, as this great Dreamcast RPG docks on Gamecube.

NGC STAR GAME

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	INFOGRAMES
DEVELOPER	SEGA
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	3
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40





GET INTO THE GAME

Get ready for a cornucopia of cut-scenes…

IN AT THE DEEP END

A single press of the Start button will set the intro movie in motion – which is worth watching for narrative reasons – after which you're straight into the action aboard Admiral Alfonso's battleship, specifically against two Valuan soldiers. This is the perfect opportunity to familiarise yourself with the choices available during combat, ie, whether you run, fight, cast magic, use items or charge up for a special move.

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

Once you know what's what, pulverise the two enemies and go after the Admiral, who's buggered off. It's all very basic at this stage and you'll fight a few more fights before catching your quarry. But he ain't givin' up easy, so sharpen your swords.



Ever listened to a piece of music, watched a film or read a book that makes you smile uncontrollably? Not because it was humorous, but because it raised the hairs on the back of your neck and flooded your brain with endorphins. It's a pleasing feeling that's as elusive as it is infrequent. Still, you know it when it happens because the corners of your mouth rise involuntarily. *Skies of Arcadia* contains enough of these diamond moments to justify its purchase alone. But it's not the only reason to indulge – far from it.

Considering how long the Cube has been around, it's criminal that we've had to wait so long for a top-notch role-player (*Phantasy Star Online* notwithstanding). *Ocarina of Time* took ages to materialise for the N64 and

SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS

More number-based monster-bashing. Are you excited?



UP, UP AND AWAY

The skies are very important in Skies of Arcadia, as they provide passage from one part of the world to another. Expect to work your way through at least three different ships, too.



WHO ARE YOU?

As in most RPGs, Skies of Arcadia is littered with Non-Player Characters (NPCs). Each is open to conversation and often yields useful information about your surroundings. That said, some are just weirdos, like this Harry Potter-alike.



SIGHTSEEING

Your adventures will take you through all manner of imaginatively-realised locales; dungeons, cities, ships, islands, shrines and deserts, to name just a few. Explore as much as you can and believe that things get prettier and more awe-inspiring the further you travel into the game.



THE PATH

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the map helps you to find your way around without getting lost. Sometimes, though, it'll display areas that do not seem to exist in the 3D world, prompting further exploration.

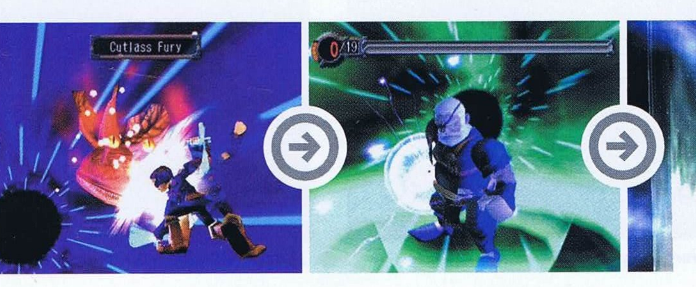
PARTY OF FIVE

While you're roaming you'll only ever see Vyse, but your party can rise as high as four – and not always with the same characters. Hit Y to drop into first-person for a 360-degree camera perspective.



HIGH SPIRITS

Make use of your special powers when your Spirit is high enough. Aside from the usual offensive moves, you can shield from magic, regenerate health, steal HP from enemies and automatically counterattack. They all look great, too.





although *Skies of Arcadia* isn't in that league, it remains a grand experience that captures the imagination and stirs the urge to explore. And you'd better believe there's plenty to see, because Sega's' ex-Dreamcast venture is huge. It'll take away a chunk of your life and you won't want it back. But that's to be expected of any self-respecting RPG.

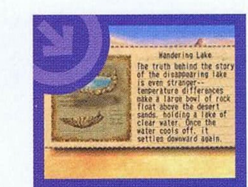
What's different is the setting: rather than a quasi-industrial future or a fantastical past steeped in Tolkeinesque mythology, you get an age where the heroes Vyse and Aika travel the skies in galleons, exploring and treasure-hunting while robbing the rich to protect the downtrodden. With the help of an ever-expanding map, you get to roam the heavens, traversing oceans of floating boulders, giant tornadoes, dark cities and mysterious islands. Yet despite the obviously linear nature of the story, there are tens of sub-quests and hidden locations just begging to be discovered and claimed in your name. Selling information will increase your riches and experience, while the inclusion of fugitive villains to accost provides endless challenges.

"THE FREQUENCY OF RANDOM COMBAT IS TOO HIGH – EVERY TEN SECONDS IS BEYOND ANNOYING"

Of course, every story needs a villain and *Skies of Arcadia* has as convoluted a plot as you could possibly desire. In fact, it's not dissimilar to a certain sci-fi flick that hit the silver screen back in the late 70s. Expect a handful of raggedy rebels to rescue an enigmatic princess from the clutches of an empire hell-bent on dominating the known universe. Expect to infiltrate a well-nigh impregnable fortress on a mission to save the world, and expect to be cheery about the whole affair at every step: *Skies* is no dark RPG.

FEMININE TOUCH

The female-led influence can be seen clearly in the characterisations – half your party are women and the hero Vyse (as impetuous and pseudo-macho as he is) is kept firmly in check by them whenever his sexist values rise to the surface. But things are always lighthearted,



DISCOVERY CARD

There are hundreds of discoveries to, er, discover, including some new ones devised for the Gamecube version. You can spend absolutely ages searching for the more elusive ones, but claiming all of them in your name is a fantastic brag for the truly hardcore – and you get to flog the information for cash at Sailor's Island.

DID YOU KNOW? The producer of *Skies of Arcadia* is female, as are many of the Sega Overworks team. Her intention was to forge a lighter RPG, with a balance between the sexes. And here it is.

"Things will suddenly fall into place and from there on in you'll be hooked"

NGC FIELD OF PLAY

Scuffling in the sky...

PLANNING THE WAR

This is the main screen for marshalling your party in a random battle. The wheel lets you run, use an item, guard, attack, make a special move, cast magic or focus (doubling your Spirit points). Use the C-stick to look about, X to check other members and Y to change your weapons' Moonstone alignment.

TAKE THAT!

When you attack or are attacked there two possible random effects: the extra-strength Critical Hit or an automatic Counterstrike. Useful.



Δ It pays to be sociable and talk to everyone you meet – more than once.



Δ Plain sailing? Well... At least you can spot threats, ports, even fish from afar.

the characters being affable and supportive. They are unusual, too, and they make a refreshing change from the noir, aloof nature of most traditional protagonists.

Even if some RPG fans feel that this is bastardising the perceived formula, they'd have to be made of stone not to be wowed by *Skies'* sense of colour and design. Take Maramba's dry, dusty deserts or the lofty, lush canopies of Ixa' taka — Sega have certainly cast their artwork splendidly. From midnight city streets and stunning, sun-seared horizons to the grandiose light shows that accompany magic and special moves, almost any theme you can name has been included.

The range of quests will take you from one wondrous place to another, constantly offering new and varied locations that require thorough exploration. *Skies of Arcadia* is totally without pretence, the vibrant nature adding a sense of invitation to the game that will attract RPG novices as well as veteran adventurers.



CHARACTER BUILDING

The GC version of Skies of Arcadia has some improvements, including fewer random battles, more discoveries, brigands to arrest and some new characters. One such is the female pirate Piastol, aka the Angel of Death. If she challenges you, our advice is to level up ten times before you take her on. Well, it's that or die.

FLY ME TO THE MOON

As you push forward, you'll get to captain your ship from one part of the world to the next. The triggers control altitude, while the D-pad lets you look around, as islands appear in true 3D before you moor at them. But it's not just empty sky, it's also home to travelling merchants and patrolling pirates for your party to engage. You'll face strong headwinds, hidden treasures, rock rifts, dark voids and swirling vortices.

In fact, it doesn't matter where you are, you're always free to break off from the quest and hunt down new enemies to increase your stats, restock and refuel, or simply see what's out there. It's arguably the piece de resistance of the game, as sailing the heavens in real time lends the illusion of complete freedom, as opposed to being locked in a randomly-generating dungeon for a seeming eternity.

Talking of clichés, no role-player would be complete without a good battle system. And *Skies* doesn't disappoint. It's turn-based, each character able to pick from the usual Attack, Block, Magic, Item and Focus, which increases the party's Spirit Rating, governing the number and strength of spells that can be cast. Collectable Moonstones let you alter the colour of your weapons, bolstering your power against different enemies. These range from the smallest Scorfly to the most gargantuan Giga, with a wealth of

SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS

More number-based monster-bashing. Are you excited?

THE BROADSIDE OF THINGS

Prepare yourself to repel boarders in skirmishes of the ship-to-ship kind.



HERE BE PIRATES!

Black pirates roam the skies, not to mention the entire Valuan fleet and its Admirals, so here's a quick exposé on the best way to dispatch marauders.



CREW QUARTERS

The grid at the top represents four turns. You can make any crew member do anything on any turn, but the enemy can strike in between, so plan ahead.



BIG GUNS

Rack up your Spirit points and you'll be able to employ the Harpoon Cannon, if you've acquired it. The chance to use it doesn't come along too often, but…




BURNING SEAS

…when it does the results tend to be spectacular. Most ships require but a single hit to go down flames. The ones that don't? Just you wait and see…



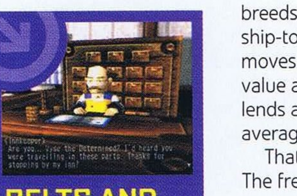
△ The Green Giga, one of six gargantuan slaves, is a blatant metaphor for nuclear capability.



△ The Temple of Pyrynn demands you solve mind-warping riddles on giant rock cylinders.



△ Maramba is an oasis in the desert land of Nasr, your first port of call in the search for the Moonstones. These little collectables are crucial, bolstering your firepower against a variety adversaries with bad attitudes.



BELTS AND BUCKLES

Every so often you'll be given the choice of answering questions or performing actions in a variety of ways. Depending on your answer/action, you can increase your Swashbuckler rating, basically your level of fame. Rising from Vyse the Unimpressive to Vyse the Legendary makes people more afraid, receptive and just plain generous.

breeds in between. You can also fight ship-to-ship by plotting four successive moves based on a predicted danger value at each turn. It's great fun and lends a sense of scale not found in the average hand-to-hand battle.

That's not to say it's a perfect game. The frequency of the random combat encounters is just too high, as you'll swiftly discover: once every ten seconds is beyond annoying, especially when you're just trying to sail to a nearby port to stock up on supplies. Of course, it does increase party experience but wouldn't be nearly as tiresome were it less often. Later in the game you can fly above and below the limits of the sky where there're no random encounters, but it's relatively late in the day to be of much consolation. Quite why the playtesters didn't pick up on it we'll never know, but it's a relatively small complaint given the rest of the game's splendour.

"IF YOU'RE NOT SMILING BY THE TIME YOU REACH DACCAT'S ISLAND, BETTER CHECK YOUR PULSE – YOU COULD BE DEAD"

And that's really what *Skies of Arcadia* embodies – pure splendour. Simply put, it's a superb RPG that's all gameplay. The cuts-scenes are curt and complementary and while the plot and scripting are immature we defy anyone to play Overworks' epic and not find themselves irresistably drawn in.

It's possible to spend hours recounting the separate ingredients that contribute to the game's flair, but ultimately the overall experience is exponentially greater than the sum of its parts. Around the five-hour mark, after the prologue quests have been completed, things will suddenly fall into place and from there on in you'll be hooked.

It's an almost intangible feeling that pervades *Skies* and to play it is to appreciate it. So if you're not smiling by the time you reach the ingenious contraptions of Daccat's Island (after a mere 30 hours) you'd better check your pulse – you could be dead.

NEIL RANDALL

+

- Pitch-perfect, magical gameplay.
- Imaginative design.
- A huge challenge.

–

- Random fight count.
- Poor script
- Launches too close to *Zelda*.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker
Nintendo
NGC/77 96%
You owe it to yourself to try this one.



7 VISUALS

Great environments and designs, but otherwise dated.

7 SOUNDS

A mix of RPG cheese and wonderfully majestic pieces.

8 MASTERY

Colour, light and detail blend effortlessly.

10 LIFESPAN

Sixty hours minimum, 100 if you want to get absolutely everything.

VERDICT

Like stats? Then this is deep, absorbing and truly epic. Sega's sky-faring RPG sets a standard that most will never attain. Roll on the sequel.





DID YOU KNOW? You can get an eyeful of Aika with her hair down by spying through a hole in the side of her house. Believe us, she does not like it one bit.

△ Who needs animation? The way your angler slides sideways across the water is… fishy.



△ Big Mouth Billy Bass. Damn that fish.



△ Oooh, another bass. How exciting.

TOP ANGLER

If by 'top' they mean 'the only fishing sim on Gamecube'…



What did the poor old bass do to deserve being the star of every single fishing sim ever? Other than taste delicious with a nice lemon and caper dressing, of course.

There must be more interesting things to catch, such as sharks, box jellyfish or giant squids. A game based on the movie Jaws, with bonus Moby Dick sections and a touch of Piranha, would be the business.

But no, this is just another conventional bass fishing game, in which you potter around on a lake and reel in countless identical fish.

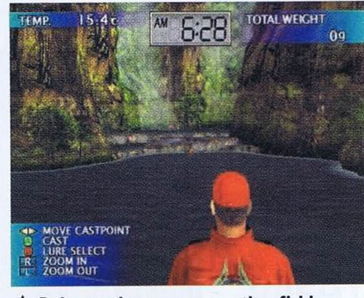
Even within its limited genre, *Top Angler* clearly isn't all that well done. The lethargic bass, no doubt thoroughly depressed at being winched out of the water and thrown into a net every couple of days, aren't particularly interested in sniffing at whatever type of hook you dangle in front of them.

Catching bass involves a lot of casting your line and reeling it back through barren stretches of water, in the hope that your combination of lure and natural angler's instinct will result in a hefty score.

If nothing much happens in one location, you can sail elsewhere on the lake, complete with a bizarre animation of your boat sliding sideways to a more favourable spot.

The graphics aren't very realistic, even considering there's only a bunch of fish and rocks to look at, and it plays like a reasonable sort of sub-game from a bigger title.

Even if bass fishing is your thing, you'll probably have more fun with the fishing game in *Ocarina of Time*.



△ Robo-angler eyes up another fishing opportunity with his X-ray vision.

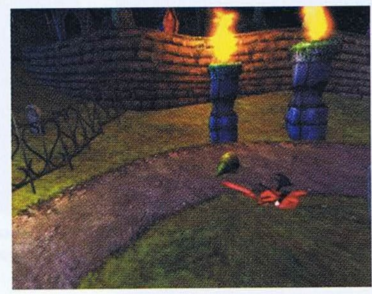


△ Got one! But if it isn't a bass, you'll have to club it over the head and throw it back.

INFO BURST

FROM	XICAT
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD	
PAGES	2
WIDESCREEN	NO
GBA LINK	NO
COST	£40





△ As soon as we loaded the disc, the office was filled with the foul stench of crapness.



△ The blue character can walk on ice, the red one can go through flames. Great.



△ Some unlucky kid is going to have his birthday ruined by this festering game. Ho ho ho.

CASTLEWEEN

A Halloween nightmare brought to life on your console. Fear it.



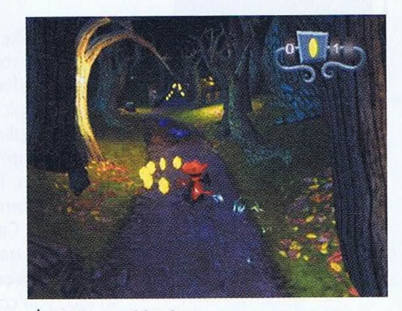
Yikes! You know a game must be as fragrant as a week-old corpse if it could reasonably be described as a poor man's *Crash Bandicoot*, but that's about the nicest thing we could think of to say about *Castleween*.

This is your basic, no-nonsense 2D platformer, which has been dressed up in a handful of badly animated polygons, and blessed with the kind of gameplay that could only impress people who have spent the last 20 years without ever seeing a computer game.

To be brutally honest, it's utter rubbish. You could conceivably finish it on your first play through, if it wasn't for the many 'instant death' surprises that lie around every other corner, and the fact that so much as brushing your character against anything hazardous returns him to the last checkpoint – which may mean having to replay several jerkily scrolling screens of eye-popping torture.

Even the game's gimmick, the ability to switch between two characters at any time, is crap, since the differences between them are minimal.

Although it looks like it's aimed squarely at the ultra young market, we can't imagine many small children having the patience to endure an 'entertainment' experience as arduous as this. Not when pushing lolly sticks into dog turds offers so much more long-term excitement, and is a good £40 cheaper.



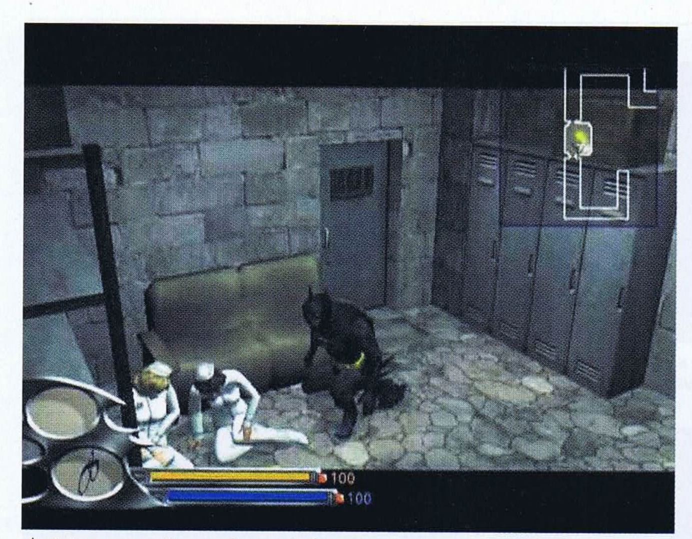
△ Collect gold tokens so you can swap between characters. As if you'd want to.



INFO BURST

FROM	WANADOO
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD	
PAGES	1
WIDESCREEN	NO
GBA LINK	NO
COST	£40

"Walk too close to cars and they explode, and kill you"



Δ Batman, ever the gentleman, helps out the nurses at gothic hellhole Arkham Asylum. See them swoon at his manly appearance, and black rubber tights.



Δ An excellent screenshot of Batman, and a dog. Yesterday.



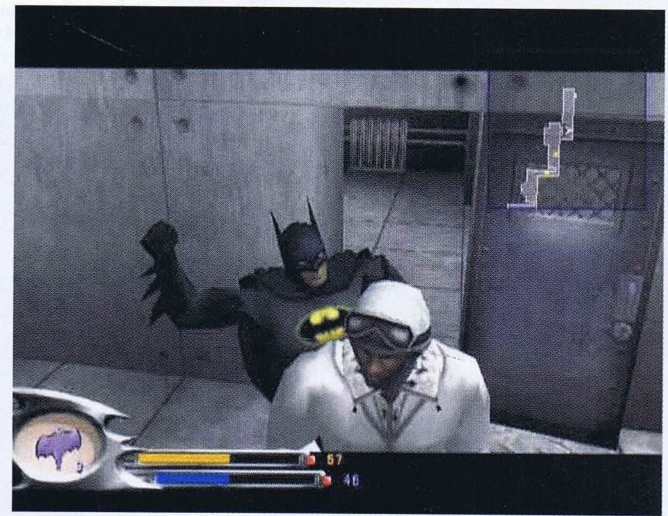
Δ Even superheroes need to use the cash machine. Y'know, for cash.



Δ Men in masks run at Batman. How stupid can they be? Very, it seems.



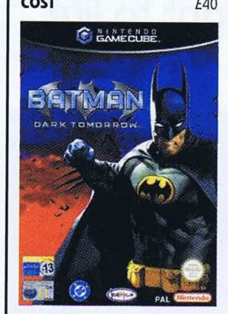
Δ Not a werewolf, but a man in a mask. Almost had us fooled.



Δ It's hard to be stealthy in *Batman: Dark Tomorrow* when the controls are so seemingly random. Still, Bats seems to be having some measure of success here.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	KEMCO
DEVELOPER	KEMCO
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	3
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40



BATMAN
DARK TOMORROW

Holy bat-guano! Could this really be as awful as *Superman 64*?

Δ Look Batman! The ceiling! Good grief.



Like having the skin flayed from your fingertips, dunking your hand into pickling vinegar and then plunging your digits into a bag of salt, *Batman: Dark Tomorrow* is literally no fun. That it's also arguably worse than *Jimmy Neutron*, Gamecube's current Worst Game, is a tragedy. At one time, this game looked very promising indeed.

In fact, you could say that *Batman* is the new *Superman*. Infogrames' latest man of steel effort (reviewed on page 48) has escaped the noose of evil that had the infamous *Superman 64* swinging from a virtual gibbet, but *Dark Tomorrow* isn't so lucky. Where *Superman 64* was hilarious in its ineptitude, *Batman: Dark Tomorrow* is, by comparison, simply depressing.

It's all such a *shame*. There's clearly a lot of care and attention to detail in some parts of the game – developers Kemco have obviously worked closely with DC comics to get Batman's world correct. The story is half-engaging, it's well-directed and every element of the comics is represented faithfully. But somewhere along the line, gameplay was shunted onto the back burner and left to wither.

Control is erratic at best. The smooth analogue control we've come to expect from other third-person games, such as *Zelda*, is glaring in its absence. Batman jerks and spins and runs when you least want him to – there's no consistency of command here. And, when you can't interact consistently with a game, the only result is irritation.

"WHERE SUPERMAN 64 WAS HILARIOUS IN ITS INEPTITUDE, BATMAN IS, BY COMPARISON, SIMPLY DEPRESSING"

DEAD BAT

You might also be in command of a number of bat-gadgets, but they're tiresome to use and shoddily implemented. The game's insistence on bat-cuffing every single goon you come across is tiresome. And swinging across rooftops – which is the first of many unendurable activities in the game – is a straightforward lesson in tedium as Batman somersaults at the end of each jump. Every single time.

It gets worse. Walk too close to cars and they explode, and kill you. Round a blind corner and you're gunned down. There's no way of avoiding such things until they've happened. This is not what we'd technically term 'gameplay'. It's Pavlovian in its punishment.

We really wanted to like this. But there are so many better things to spend £40 on, and life's just too short.

JES BICKHAM



- It's got a proper story to it.
- Batman's cool.
- Um?



- Awful controls.
- Frighteningly atrocious gameplay.
- A terrible shame.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Batman Vengeance
Ubi Soft
NGC/67 70%
Immeasurably superior Batman game, but still only average in real terms.



4 VISUALS
Some nice character models, but it's all so muddy and dull.

6 SOUNDS
Good soundtrack and annoying speech-samples.

3 MASTERY
It's in fancy 3D, but it's ineptly implemented.

2 LIFESPAN
A shiny gold medal to whoever completes it first.

VERDICT
A real wasted opportunity, comic's coolest superhero is demoted to dribbling Arkham Asylum inmate. Close to a travesty.





DID YOU KNOW? Frank Miller recently wrote a sequel to his acclaimed and wonderful Dark Knight Returns, The Dark Knight Strikes Again. It sucked.

"It's a string of bite-sized morsels – much like a shish kebab"

MAGIC STONES
These fly out of enemies when they are struck, even more so when killed, and refill your magic meter. If said meter is already full, they count as currency, which is nice.

If you find Magic Stones while your magic reserves are already full, the Magic Stones will be counted as gold pieces, for use in card shops.

HELLO! TARA!
This is the feisty female protagonist. Why is it that men are never feisty, we wonder? Anyway, her face doesn't look that Grim to us...

CRUSH! KILL! MAIM!
This little red fella is a hobgoblin, and is valiantly attempting to kill these big brutes for you, while you sit back and watch him get stomped on.

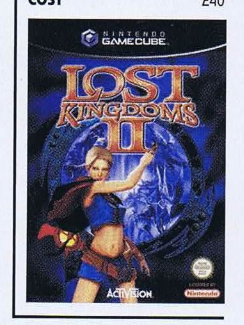
You have found the Porcupig card!

CLASSIC
This is your current hand. Your deck can be bolstered by finding treasure in chests out in the middle of nowhere. Lawks! What will they think of next?

LOST KINGDOMS II

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER	FROM SOFTWARE
RELEASE DATE	NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
MEMORY CARD PAGES	3
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40



The sequel to the game, not the 1961 Italian fantasy film. Just to clear that up.

Lost Kingdoms, as we pointed out at the time, was better than you thought it was going to be. And we were right. Oh yes we were. It's a fantasy action-based RPG that operates like a funkified card game, and it works pretty darn well.

The sequel, imaginatively titled *Lost Kingdoms II* (but, on the other hand, it would have been foolish to call it *Super Crazy Lemming Golf 4*) does everything a good sequel should, we're happy to report. All the graphical enhancements we mentioned in our preview are present and correct. And the cut-scenes, and extra character abilities, certainly add considerable depth.

However, as far as depth goes, we're not talking the Atlantic ocean of gaming here. Yes, there is more plot to get involved in, and yes, the new ability to actually transform yourself into a Birdman and fly over chasms, or into a Hellhound to jump up cliff faces, is great. But we're still wading with our petticoats of cynicism cautiously raised above our knees, rather than diving for pearls of gaming greatness.

MONSTER'S BALL

The sequel is set 200 years after the events of the first. You play Tara Grimface, a young lady raised by thieves and desperados (aka the Band of the Scorpion). And you have the rather nifty power of being able to use a deck of cards to summon monsters of various stripes to do her, and therefore your, bidding. In the code we reviewed, there's a small intro level before the game proper, but there are still regular hints and tips, which pop up from time to time, to help out the newbie. You can visit a variety of dungeons, ranging from mines to frozen wastes. Essentially this is a string of bite-sized morsels, which you can digest when you feel ready, and revisit later if you see the need - much like a shish kebab.



△ Remember these little chaps from the first game? Collecting them like crazy...

It's very pretty, and it has depths to be plumbed for statophiles really getting into the deck-construction side of things, but as an action-based RPG comparisons to *Zelda* and *PSO* are inevitable, and unfortunate. As fun as *Lost Kingdoms 2* is, it can't hold a dribbly, magical candle to those goliaths. Difficult to call it anyone's first choice, but it's still worthy of praise.

TOM MAYO



- Easy to pick up.
- Sucks you in.
- Bigger, better, faster than before.



- Can't compete against the big boys.
- A bit limited.
- Too little, too late?

IF YOU LIKE THIS...
Lost Kingdoms
Activision
NGC/70 86%
The first one. Not so different, but not so many bells and whistles, either.



8 VISUALS
Sharper, vibrant and more detailed than the last outing.

6 SOUNDS
Well you won't want to hack your own ears off – result!

7 MASTERY
The magic stone system is extremely neat and tidy.

8 LIFESPAN
Bite-size gameplay and deck-construction depths prolong matters.

VERDICT
A hearty slap on the back to the developers for making it a certifiably more satisfying experience, but it's still on the frothy side.



87

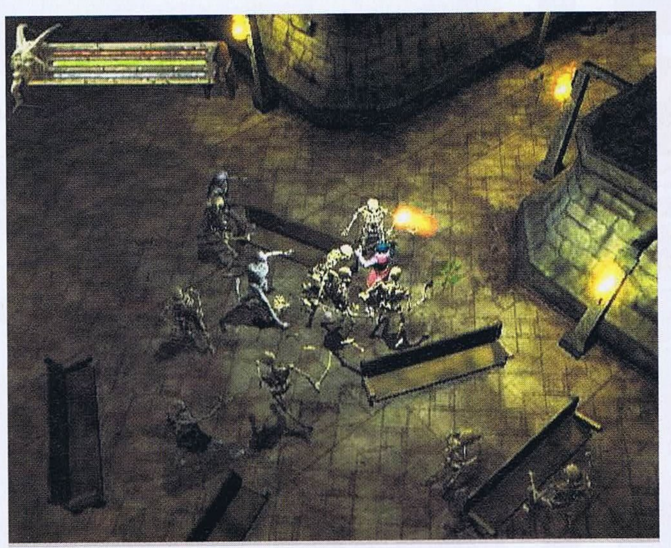

Δ Beastly great statues that breathe fire. It's like something out of Clash of the Titans, only on the Gamecube and not a film, not using models. Get it?


Δ As a single-player game this can get monotonous. Hack, slash etc.


Δ Getting more magic is great fun – you need lots of experience, though.


Δ That big head thing is called a Beholder. Not that we're geeks.


Δ Ah, good old Frost Giants. Why can't they be nicer to people?

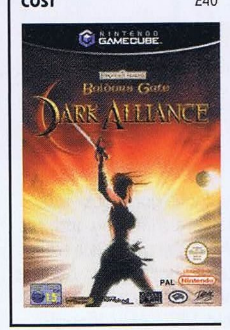

Δ The undead! A nasty bunch indeed, in a scene more than reminiscent of the NGC office at 9.30am on a Monday morning. Braaaaiiiiinnns! And so on.

BALDUR'S GATE DARK ALLIANCE

Dust down the jerkin and slip on some greaves for a spot of good old-fashioned goblin-chopping.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	VIVENDI
DEVELOPER	SNOWBLIND
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
MEMORY CARD PAGES	29
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40



Don't be fooled by the beardy exterior, as *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance* isn't only for those weaned on Advanced Dungeons and Dragons. Although devotees of the pencil-and-paper RPG may find more to admire here than the layman (at least in an appreciation of the mechanics behind the hacking and slaying), *Dark Alliance* is nonetheless a highly entertaining romp that ought to be played – even if you have a pathological hatred of swords, sorcery and Gelatinous Cubes.

A simplified, streamlined iteration of a series of PC-based originals, *Dark Alliance* hides its statistics beneath a veneer of frenetic combat. Like *Phantasy Star Online*, this centres on mowing down hordes of enemies to gain experience and grow in power.

Choosing from one of three characters – Human Ranger, Dwarf Fighter or Elf Sorceress – the single-player game can get tedious, as you wade through hordes of kobolds and ogres. But the palpable thrill of levelling up, and the options available to you when spending your experience points, make the monotonous button-mashing an acceptable trade-off.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

And it's all been presented with an emphasis on making the game as transparent as possible. You won't get bogged down in statistics. For example, there's a list of spells that the Sorceress can 'buy,' and increase her proficiency with, with similar systems for the Dwarf and Ranger. There's real depth here, but the nuts and bolts have been carefully hidden to make the game more about action than number-crunching.

So, *Baldur's Gate* may not be anything particularly new, but it offers a wonderfully polished take on old-school RPGing. A fun game, however, is transformed into a hugely enjoyable one if you've got a mate to join in. The co-operative mode, like going online in *PSO*, really brings the game to life. It's suddenly transformed from being about endless slicing and dicing, to protecting your teammate, formulating strategies and interacting socially.

It's sad to say, though, that the Gamecube version of *Baldur's Gate* is technically poor. *Dark Alliance* originally appeared on the PS2, and a lazy port has done the game no favours. There's some shocking slowdown and frame-rate issues which impact the flow of the game, especially when there are plenty of beasties on screen. Nonetheless, the game still looks a treat, stuffed full of detail, even given the isometric viewpoint and tiny characters. Despite its faults, though, this remains a real treat. Definitely worth a look.

JES BICKHAM



- Top-notch RPG.
- Co-operative play.
- Rich and deep.
- Hugely involving.



- Shoddy port – look at the frame-rate!
- Very old-school.
- Hack, hack, hack…



Lost Kingdoms 2
Activision
NGC/81 87%
Reviewed in this very issue. A superior sequel to an excellent original.



7 VISUALS
Basic but detailed, with lovely water and fire effects.

7 SOUNDS
Suitably sombre orchestral music, plus beast noises.

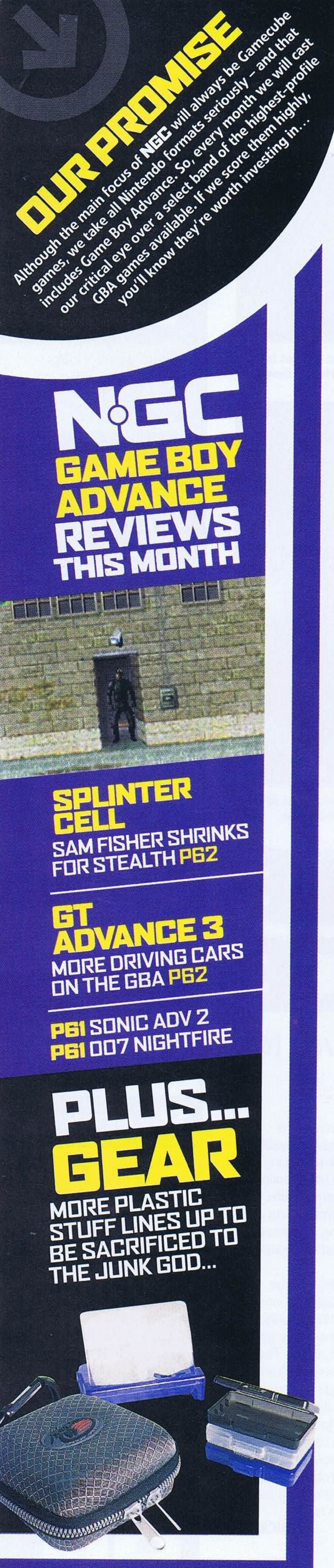
7 MASTERY
A shoddy port with frame-rate issues, but otherwise great.

8 LIFESPAN
A 15 hour quest enlivened hugely with a chum.

VERDICT
Old-school stats and sorcery, but delivered in a highly entertaining package that's simply great with two players.









Those wheely tyre-things are good eatin'. Swallow 'em up and hey presto, you can roll around just like a… wheel. Crazy stuff, huh?

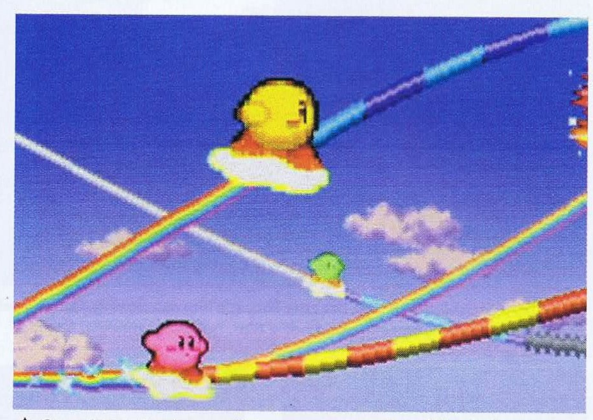


It may look like he's screaming in distress, as if Kittsy's after him with a knife or hideously sharp trident, but he's just ready to swallow.





The main game is easy but contains hidden items for the hardcore.



One of the pleasing multiplayer games – a lot of simple fun.





It's quite an easy game, but an always enjoyable one. Bless.

KIRBY

NIGHTMARE IN DREAM LAND

Cute pink blob or sinister identity thief? Suck it and see in Kirby's latest and greatest adventure.



Never Nintendo's most popular mascot (despite the cartoon based on him, and the increasing marketing spend dedicated to getting his visibility raised), Kirby's games have always paled in comparison to Mario and Link's efforts, by being short, easy and a little uninspired. Admittedly, the pink blob has a great USP, but the games he's starred in have never really lived up to his own uniqueness (*Smash Bros* being an admirable exception).

Nightmare in Dream Land doesn't really change that, although it is never less than charming and wonderful to watch. Those of you with longer memories might remember the original *Kirby's Adventure* on the NES; this new game is pretty much just a retooling of that, with multiplayer support and vastly improved visuals.

The game sees you scrolling from left to right, dispatching baddies and fighting bosses. Utterly unoriginal stuff then, even if it's beautifully presented, and enlivened mainly by Kirby's remarkable gob. With over 20 different abilities to utilise, there's plenty of fun to be had seeing what you'll get next. However, you'll also see the end of the game in a couple of hours.

But, like *Yoshi's Story* on the N64, *Nightmare in Dream Land* contains hidden depths. It's all too easy to rush through, but for the more determined player there's plenty to discover. Finding all the hidden stuff takes enough brain power and use of abilities to keep you coming back for more.

The multiplayer modes are fun, too. Three simple minigames add bonus laughs, and the four-player co-operative is the icing on the cake. It's not as great as *Four Swords*, but it's a worthy addition and fun.

Finally, the game looks gorgeous. The animation and detail are charming and, on a fancy backlit GBA SP, the game is a treat. Sure, it might be candy-floss sweet, but this is a stunning visual showcase for Nintendo's handheld. Ultimately, though, Kirby's latest is too lightweight to be considered a classic – it's just a lot of fun.

"IT MIGHT BE CANDY-FLOSS SWEET, BUT THIS IS A STUNNING SHOWCASE FOR NINTENDO'S HANDHELD…"

INFO BURST

FROM	NINTENDO
PLAYERS	1-4
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	YES
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	JUNE
COST	£30



△ The bosses take the form of these fast-paced chases. This particular Robotnik encounter can be woefully frustrating, and most of them will take a few goes to suss out.



△ There are too many occasions when you feel as though all you're doing in pushing…



△ … forward. The secret stages are worth stopping to seek out, as they unlock extras.

SONIC ADVANCE 2

Something old and something blue? Another month, another *Sonic* game…



There's only so much you can do with a 2D *Sonic* game these days and, just as we expected, this new instalment does little to bring anything new to the party.

Like the last GBA effort, you have a number of characters you can play as. Only this time there's a series newcomer, Cream the Rabbit (no, we're not joking), to play as once unlocked.



△ Here's Cream the Rabbit who you unlock after defeating the first boss…



△ … her flying ability only lasts a short while as she eventually gets knackered.

As usual, the game starts off in a 'green' world (this time called Leaf Forest), before leading on to the requisite lava and ice worlds. There's also a relatively interesting 'Music Plant' level scattered with musical bumpers, and – again – the requisite industrial level. There are eight levels in total, but none of them did much to make us feel as though we haven't been here before.

Still, it will doubtless please Sonic fans. The game is fast and the visuals are crisp, clear and colourful, making playing, even in dodgy lighting conditions, relatively easy. The special stages are now much better than those of its predecessor – that stupid free-fall tube-thing has been replaced by a far more entertaining ring-grabbing affair, on a flat surface, with a robot chasing you. There are also a fair few secrets to uncover, such as hidden characters and Chao Garden minigames, as well as a fairly amusing multiplayer.

It'll hardly set the world alight, but it's still good solid fun.

INFO BURST

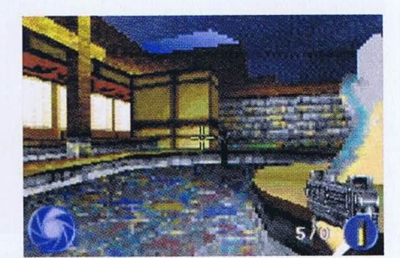
FROM	INFOGRAMES
PLAYERS	1-4
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	NO
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	NOW
COST	£30

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING **73**



△ Don't shoot him. You're supposed to be stealthy and sneak past quitely. Like a mouse.





△ In this level you have to rescue these maids from their captors. The end of the level sees you battling it out against a Ninja in a Japanese garden. It's darned tricky so it is…

JAMES BOND 007 NIGHTFIRE

A licence to drill holes in peoples' heads! Bond simulation made miniature…



△ The first level. Sneak into this Austrian castle by following the supply truck.



This one came as something of a pleasant surprise. A surprise in that it doesn't actually suck ass (*That's twice you've said that this issue - Ed*). In fact, it's all rather enjoyable.

Technically it might not be quite as good as something like *Ecks vs Sever 2*, but this game is certainly no slouch, visually.

Okay, so the resolution is quite low (as you'd expect from a GBA shooter) but, saying that, the environments are nicely detailed without getting too repetitive or samey. And there are some nice little touches (such as the sniper rifle) that make it a good deal more impressive than something like *Doom*.

All the expected Bond gadgetry puts in an appearance. Watch lasers, grapple hooks and, of course, a nice selection of guns are all put to good use, with missions requiring a whole lot more than just gunning down baddies. There are plenty of interesting objectives to fulfil and tasks to complete. Taking out helicopters with a rocket launcher, freeing hostages by sniping their captors and escort missions where you have to protect individuals from gunfire, all make an appearance. There are also stealth-based missions where you have to avoid detection from guards and cameras.

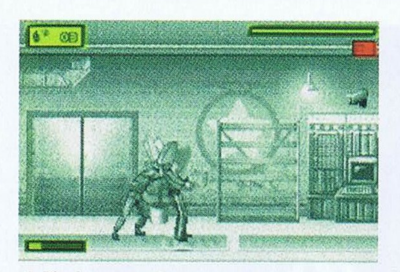
It's both enjoyable and engrossing and, over the seven missions available, you'll face a pretty steep challenge that keeps you constantly on your toes. The only downside is that there's no multiplayer. But then, so what?

INFO BURST

FROM	EA
PLAYERS	1
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	NO
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	NOW
COST	£30



"In many ways it's like a scaled down, simplified *Gran Turismo*"

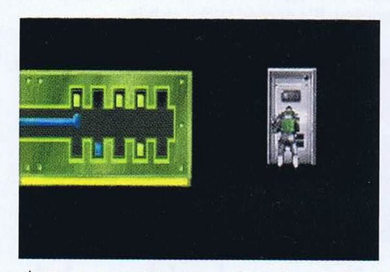




△ You're pretty low on ammo, so sneaking about proves to be your best weapon.



△ Crouching lets you move more silently, allowing you to take people from behind.



△ The lock-picking is a rather nice touch.



△ Climb under this pipe to avoid the fire.

SPLINTER CELL

Fishering for a complement to Clancy's spytastic stealth-fest.



For a side-scrolling rendition of the bigger console versions, this has turned out to be a pretty damn good effort. Following the same story as the Gamecube game, you have to guide Sam Fisher through the different levels. Your role is to off the bad guys, while completing mission objectives such as accessing certain computers and locating any special items and data.

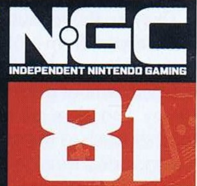
Much like in the GC version, Sam can't take too many hits from the enemy, so you have to rely on more cunning tactics. Cue lots of creeping up on people from behind, avoiding the robotic gaze of the cameras and hiding in cupboards (yes, really). Essentially, this boils down to watching enemy movement patterns and then moving when you think it's safe. Set off an alarm and you'll have to leg it to the nearest terminal to turn it off. Fail to do so, and it's game over.

The (mostly) leisurely pace is a surprisingly good thing. During the later parts of the game a fair amount of forethought is required, and this rise in challenge keeps things interesting, as do the game's many nice little touches. The timed lockpicking and safe-cracking manoeuvres add nervous moments of panic, as does the mad dash to turn off the alarm or fend off enemies with minimal ammo. Add to this a GBA link-up to the GC version for some bonus levels, and yes, you've got the perfect complement to its 3D daddy.

INFO BURST

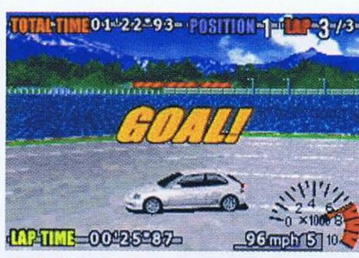
FROM	UBI SOFT
PLAYERS	1
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	NO
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	NOW
COST	£30



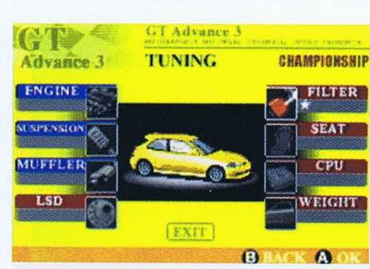




△ Don't be put off by the complete lack of scenery. The process of actually driving is where it's at. And, when you open up the better cars, the experience improves a great deal.



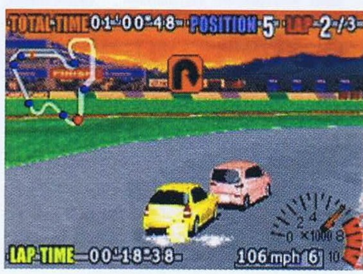
△ At the end of a race you can view a replay of your driving from all angles.



△ You can steadily upgrade any cars you've won for your expanding garage.

GT ADVANCE 3

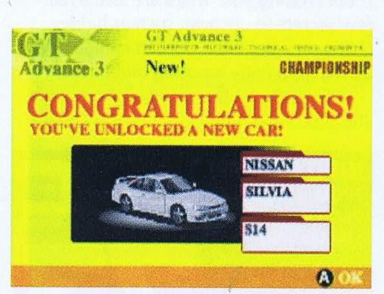
More GT, vicar? Stat-juggling is in for the latest instalment of the GBA rally-king.



△ There are a number of classes to race through. From little sporty hatchbacks...



△ ...to more powerful vehicles. There really is quite a lot to get your teeth into.



△ All the cars you get to race in are taken from Japanese manufacturers.



Hurrah! It's a racing game where you actually have to *steer* to get around the tracks! Lately, there's been a disturbing trend in racers towards the kind of handling that forces you down the track with little need for slowing down, or even steering. Thankfully *GT Advance 3* isn't one of them.

In the tradition of this excellent GBA racing series, *GT 3* adopts more of a sim-style to the racing rather than just a straight-up arcade experience. In many ways, it's like a scaled-down, simplified *Gran Turismo*. You start off going through basic training in simple cars and then you unlock new vehicles, and tuning options, as you start winning races.

No mean feat for the GBA, especially considering there's no analogue option. But you can actually feel the difference that your new vehicles make to your racing. Also, the handling of the vehicles is quite advanced, requiring you to brake, and decelerate, a great deal in order to succeed in the higher classes.

This depth of experience in the races themselves more than makes up for the fact that visually the game is quite sparse, with little in the way of background. There's no question that this is the best 'realistic' driver for the system, though, and most definitely worthy of your money.



INFO BURST

FROM	THQ
PLAYERS	1-2
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	NO
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	NOW
COST	£30

OLD SALTS

Being a peaceful, benevolent kind of game, it comes as no surprise to find that doing a fellow citizen a good deed will earn you one in return. Here crazy sea dog, Mr Briney, offers to sail you anywhere after you save his pet seagull from thugs. Of course we wanted to go to Cuba, but that's not an option – for some reason.





EASILY AMUSED

When you come across a place that won't let you in easily, you can guarantee it's worth a visit. Who would have thought that if you didn't get into the museum you'd never get the chance to protect a doddery old bloke from being mugged? No one.









KEEP IT REEL

The Pokémon-catching business isn't just about rolling around in the long grass, you know. Fairly early on in the game you earn an old fishing rod, perfect for snaring sea-dwelling Pokémon such as Tentacruel.

BATTLE BOYS

Not all Pokémon wait to be found. Some of the critters actively attack you. As the game goes on this usually happens straight after your beasts have just come through a gruelling battle. It's ridiculously unfair.

NGC STAR GAME

POKÉMON RUBY/SAPPHIRE

The multi-faceted jewel in Nintendo's GBA crown gets some much-needed spit and polish…



O

It's all change in handheld land. The GBA SP's been released to sort out that problem screen, the Zelda games should finally see the GBA-GC connectivity niche take off, and for everyone else… Well, this summer's big hope is pretty much the same as last year's. And the year before. And the year before that. Indeed, arguably, the Big N's response to every crisis since 1996 has been the same: release new Pokémon games. Cue synthesised fanfares and David Gosen flatly enunciating "I. Love. The. Sound. Of. Cash. Reg-isters. In. The. Mor-ning" in a metallic voice.

Yes, yes you say, but to the games. Well, no surprise, the first two Pokémon games to hit the GBA very much follow the template of the previous six. You are a lowly Poké-trainer who has to catch and train said wild beasties into a crack fighting team, before working your way up through the world's various gyms. Or, to put it even more simply, it's Tamagotchi meets Rocky. Complementing the action there's the obligatory innocent boy/girl-saves-world-against-surely-impossible-odds plot. Buy *Pokémon Ruby* and you'll find yourself out to thwart Team Magma, who are planning to cover the world in lava. Buy *Pokémon Sapphire* and you'll combat team Aqua who – yep, you guessed it – are out to the flood it. But, as before, they're essentially the same game, and they both have several exclusive Pokémon that can be traded via the link cable.

All of which makes it hard not to be a little underwhelmed by the series' GBA debut – at least to begin with. The graphics are on the disappointing side, and so much of the game is more than familiar. Prof Oak has been replaced by Prof Birch and a place spookily similar to Veridian Forest now seems to be occupied by Petalburg Woods. File under Familiarity Breeds Contempt.

But after the first gym battle things start to get interesting. **NGC**'s abiding memory

> **"TO THE SURPRISE OF NO ONE, THE FIRST TWO GBA POKÉMON GAMES FOLLOW THE LEAD OF THE LAST SIX"**

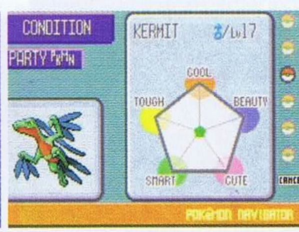
CURRYING FAVOUR

A rough guide to the spicy new bits of *Ruby* and *Sapphire*.



NEW RIVALS

New games, new rivals. Boys get to take on May (who's actually rather charming), while the lasses have to pit their wits against Brendan, who's got a touch of the Garys about him.



BE-GANGING AGAIN

Just as you have a new rival you also have a new band of baddies to battle. Being Water Pokémon fanatics, Team Aqua are out to flood the planet for the general benefit of fishy-types.



IN THE NAVI

Trainers get the PokéNavi. It contains your Pokémons' cool characteristics and a map of the game world. Here you can also plan your Pokémons' assault on that Best In Show title.



BOUT TIME

The fighting screens now come with added info. And, best of all, you can now teach some Pokémon moves against their type. Flying Pokémon can learn Grass moves and so on.

STONEFACE-OFF

Much like in previous Pokémon games – only more so – the people you're trying to find have a nasty habit of hiding in labyrinthine abodes, surrounded by rock-hard Pokémon.



The overworld is very expansive, and will take a while to navigate.

By the time you've collected most of the Pokémon, organising and storing them can be a serious logistical headache.



The battle scenes are still basic – more animation on the Pokémon would have been nice.









The Pokédex is now much bigger, offering more details on your favourite monsters.

of the *Red/ Blue/ Yellow* phenomenon was of being inundated by fans of the cartoon who got stuck after all of 30 seconds. The early Pokémon games were not just huge, and vastly underrated RPGs, but they were just so random and involved so much repetition and backtracking, that even a saint would want to curse like Johnny Vegas. *Ruby* and *Sapphire*, on the other hand, are noticeably tighter, which means that the games' legendary addictiveness only takes about five hours to kick in rather then the ten or so required previously.

WOOF WOOF

They also follow through some of *Gold/ Silver/ Crystal*'s more intriguing ideas. You can now give your Pokémon items to hold during battle (such as, um, a silk scarf) that will increase, or warp, their powers. This allows Flying Pokémon to learn Grass moves and so on. Two-on-two tag battles also occur now and, added to the 351 Pokémon to be found across both games, they give a subtlety and depth to the fighting system that just wasn't apparent before. It also means that, unless you're rubbish, you'll stand a fighting chance.

Other neat additions include a *Harvest Moon*-type berry-growing facility, which enables you to grow Pokémon-specific nutrients. Weirdest of all, there are various Crufts-style ribbons that can be competed for. And despite ourselves, we couldn't help but feel a warm paternal pride when our Grovyle walked off with the Coolest Pokémon ribbon. Sad? Yes, perhaps, but it is a fitting testament to just how engrossing this series is.

Although it's only been around for eight years or so, there's a classic feel to Pokémon already and, while at times you get the feeling that Nintendo aren't trying as hard as they could, these are still the best instalments so far. And, we'll tell you this for free, we wouldn't bet against them being the hottest thing to drop this summer, either. You have been warned.

SCOTT ANTHONY





INFO BURST

FROM	NINTENDO
PLAYERS	1
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	NO
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	JULY
COST	£35

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING

90

"There are welcome additions to an already honed formula"

YOUR LIFE
Some attacks can destroy you in a few moves, so use Guard. On Weapons Master, this takes on different properties, such as gradually recovering, or draining (when you've been 'poisoned').

CHARACTERS
There are twenty in total. All have their own strengths, weaknesses and attack styles. Learning all of them will take you ages.

YOUR WEAPON
Know it, and know it well. If you only have a little knife and your opponent has a whopping great axe, a face-to-face standoff will see you die like the dog you are. Understanding your weapon and the relevant tactics behind it are the key to success.

STAGES
There are a fair few to unlock, and many have unique properties that will affect your game. Some will do damage to your character should you fall in certain areas, some are slippery, and some will make you sink. Yet others make you vulnerable to massive damage – you can get yourself stuck in, say, a moat of lava.

NGC STAR GAME



PUBLISHER	NAMCO
DEVELOPER	NAMCO
RELEASE DATE	NOW (JAP)
PLAYERS	1-2
MEMORY CARD PAGES	4
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£70

namco NINTENDO GAMECUBE



SOUL CALIBUR II

The best of the best just got better. Step onto the stage of history, where the soul still burns…



ARCADE MODE
This is your straight-up arcade-battle scenario. There's you, and then there's a whole bunch of fighters to cut your way through before you get to the final boss. It's pretty uninspiring and there's not much to unlock here, but it's still a decent enough place to kick off the proceedings.

VERSUS
If you've got a mate round, you don't want to bother with that Arcade rubbish – it's time to get down to brass tacks. That's what SCII is all about. Two human competitors, two virtual constructs armed with weapons the size of houses, and a pair of joypads to knead until there's sweaty residue congealing around your D-pad. Apart from a pair of pram-faces scrapping it out over the last Bacardi Breezer, it doesn't get more competitive than this.





Even after four years, some would say that *Soul Calibur* in its Dreamcast iteration is a 3D fighter that has yet to be bettered. *Tekken, Dead or Alive* and *Virtua Fighter* are all fantastic beat-'em-ups, but *Soul Calibur* had that something special that – to those who played it extensively – put it in a league of its own. Blissfully intuitive and responsive controls, gloriously fluid animation, and a battle system that didn't rely on committing ludicrous sequences of button-presses to memory ensured that it stayed a firm favourite in the office right up until… well, until this sequel arrived.

IF IT AINT BROKE...
Once you start this latest respray, you might feel a twinge of disappointment,

SOUL CALIBUR II

It's the knife and soul of the party!

△ Yunsung is the replacement for Hwang. He has a great big machete and a nasty array of kicks.

△ It's a meaty old mode, so it is. Unfortunately, 'cheapness' and repetition are the quickest methods to get through it.

SHOPAHOLIC

It's an obsession, alright. Every success in Weapon Master means a bag of shiny gold to spend on weapons, upgrade the game's existing game-types (so you can use the new weapons), and pick up a few fetching new outfits for the fighters.

though. The basics of the fighting engine are *very* similar to the DC prequel, y'see. Namco have made no drastic changes to the formula. In fact, take up one of your favourite characters, and you'll be amazed at just how familiar they feel. Their speed, the timing of their strikes, and their range are all as you'd expect them to be. Much that was great about the last game, from the smallest details upwards, has been kept in place.

"MUCH THAT WAS GREAT ABOUT THE LAST GAME, FROM THE SMALLEST DETAILS UPWARDS, HAS BEEN KEPT IN PLACE"

The controls are still nice and simple, too. Each character has two basic weapon moves – a vertical slash and a horizontal slash – as well as kicking moves. Extra attacking options come in the from of grapple moves, which can be accessed by pressing the guard button along with one of the weapon attack buttons. Approach your opponent from one of four sides by using the superb eight-way run function to use different sets of grapple moves. It's a simple system that's very easy to get your head around from the word go. More to the point, it gives player movement a level of freedom that other beat-'em-ups simply can't match. Side-stepping, circling and evading incoming attacks is very easy, making battles much more than players just facing each other down and taking it in turns to dish out slaps when a suitable window presents itself.

You'll also be pleased to hear that the Gamecube controller – source of one of our biggest misgivings when it comes to games like this – is well suited to *Soul Calibur II*, with a comfortable layout that resembles the arcade version.



RINKYDINK!

The old Link. As you're probably aware by now, he's in it, and in all honesty he's never looked so good. What's more, he's well suited to the game, considering he's wearing tights and brandishing a sword. He's actually pretty handy with it, too, and is one of the game's more versatile characters. Fans of the green pixie will not be disappointed...

IN WITH THE NEW...

You'll probably have guessed by now that *Soul Calibur II* plays very much like its predecessor. No bad thing, but there are some welcome additions to an already-honed formula.

If there was one thing that we missed in *Soul Calibur*, it

"Gold can be spent on different weapons and costumes"

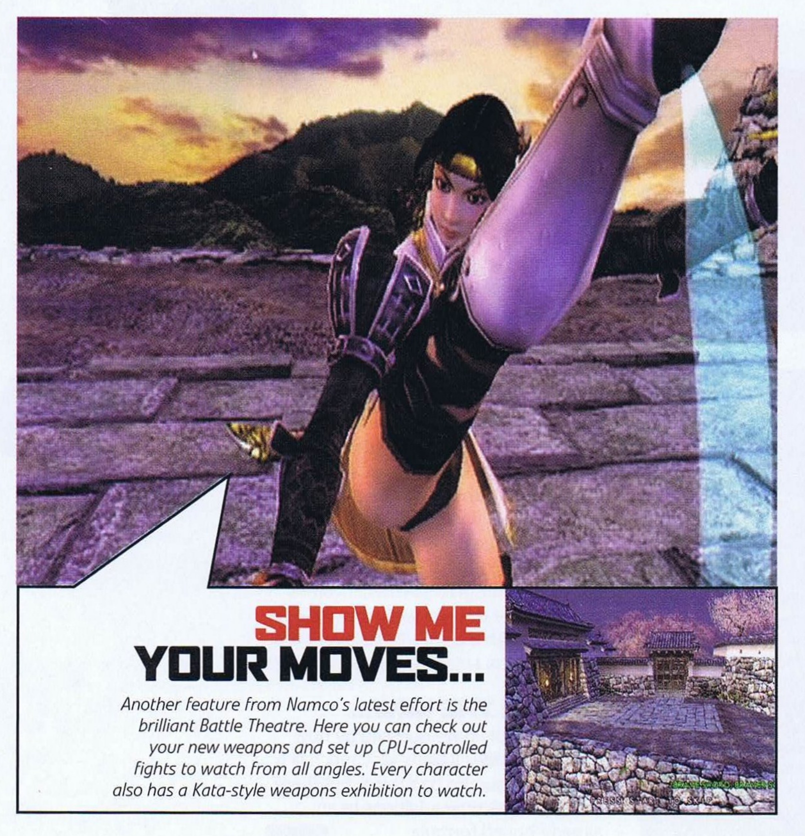


△ **Throwing is something *Soul Calibur* excels at, providing pugilists with some of the loveliest grapplage since Tatu got caught in a downpour (*Er... – Ed*). Different angles give a range of attacks...**









SHOW ME YOUR MOVES...

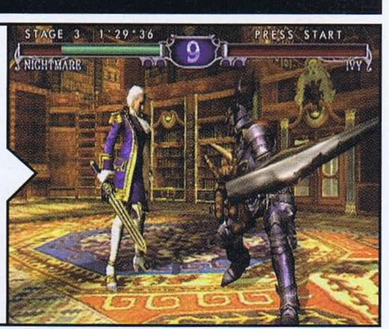
Another feature from Namco's latest effort is the brilliant Battle Theatre. Here you can check out your new weapons and set up CPU-controlled fights to watch from all angles. Every character also has a Kata-style weapons exhibition to watch.

DEBUTANTE'S DOJO

Getting to grips with the basics of **Soul Calibur II.**

MANOEUVRING

This is the aspect that really sets the game apart from other fighters. Soul Calibur's eight-way run function is wonderfully simple to use. Not sluggish in the least, it allows you to quickly sidestep opponents or even circle all the way around them. Forcing them into committing themselves to attacks before countering is very satisfying. Even more pleasing is the range of grapple options open to you as you approach opponents from all angles.



GUARDING

Guarding can prevent both high and low attacks, as well as providing you with cover while you figure out your next move. There's also a Guard Impact ability. By tapping Guard together with forward or down at the moment an opponent goes to strike you, you can knock their attack away, opening them up for a counter – this is one of the game's most vital skills. A nice addition is the series is the ability to guard while running.

WEAPON ATTACKS

Naturally, these are what you'll be using to deal out most of the damage. You have vertical and horizontal slashes at your disposal, and combinations of these, or in conjunction with stabs on the D-pad, allow you to strike out in almost any trajectory. One of the best additions to the game is the ability to parry attacks by using the same strike at exactly the same instant as your opponent, sending their attack away from your body.



SPECIAL ATTACKS

When you use certain attacks you'll notice your character crackle with a little extra lighting (and lightning) – these are powerful in themselves, but to realise their true potential you'll need to power up your character by pressing all three attack buttons at the same time. Once you've done this you character will be 'Soul Charged', giving a window of opportunity to dish out some serious whupp-ass. Use in combos for devastating results.

was the ability to collect different weapons, a feature that appeared in the first of the series, *Soul Blade* on PSone. Thankfully, Namco have decided to resurrect it, in the form of Weapon Master mode. You have to battle through a series of wide-ranging challenges, from defeating teams of enemies within a strict time limit, to battling it out on slippery, icy arenas, or even in quicksand. Successfully complete the challenge requirements, and you'll be awarded with EXP that raises your character rank, as well as gold that can be spent in the Weapon Master mode's shop on different weapons of varying price and ability, extra costumes for some of the characters (why not all of them we'll never know), and some lovely artwork and character weapon exhibitions. There are also a number of different modes to unlock too (such as Survival and Time Attack) and, once uncovered, the weapons and costumes you've bought can be used within these different modes as well.

"IT HASN'T EVOLVED THE SERIES A GREAT DEAL, BUT SCII HAS CRYSTALLISED INTO THE BEST FIGHTER MONEY CAN BUY"

Just as before, unlocking the game's

SOUL CALIBUR II

It's the knife and soul of the party!

△ Raphael – master of fencing, mincing, and wearing frilly cravats – sports the campest wardrobe of breeches in the whole history of Frenchdom. Facing off against Taki, he's about to get the gusset-burning he so richly deserves.

△ The boss-eyed Xianghua gets some facial 're-adjustment' from Dr Link's surgical fire arrows.



△ Ivy gets a smacking for wearing that stupid admiral's coat…



staggering wealth of extras is extremely compulsive and, more importantly, challenging. The latter stages of Weapon Master are brutally tough, with your character's health diminishing all the time because of 'poison', or having to battle opponents that are nigh-on invincible, forcing you to juggle, throw or knock them out of the ring to defeat them.

However, on the game's normal difficulty setting, we do have a couple of misgivings. Firstly, the computer AI is pretty dumb, falling for the same tactics over and over again (you'll be hard pushed to outwit it on the toughest setting, mind you), which means trudging through some of the rather long-winded dungeons degenerates into a process of just using the same move over and over just so you can unlock stuff quicker.

We're also a little annoyed at the lack of original Challenge types you encounter. In the original *Soul Calibur*, many of the challenges revolved around learning new skills – forcing you into mastering defensive moves and the kind of techniques needed to juggle your opponent. This time, things are less that way inclined. Instead, you're faced with a long, arduous slog, fighting through bout after bout of needless encounters – a rather cynical way of drawing out the game's lifespan. We would have preferred a few less battles and a little more imagination in the confrontations you come across.

Still, these are comparatively minor issues, through which the astounding quality of this game still shines. While newcomers to the *Soul* series will be able to get into the game easily and enjoy themselves immensely, continue to investigate the game's subtle defensive parries and guarding techniques – not to mention combos and special moves – and you'll find a supremely rewarding game. And the Versus mode (the most important aspect in any fighter) will provide many an hour of meaty gameplay as you and your mates hone your skills.

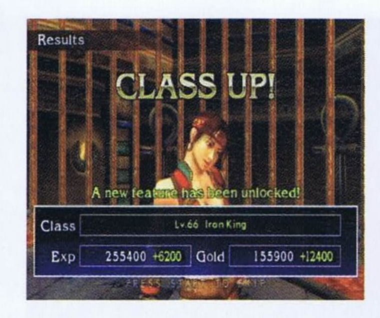
Stunningly presented, with vibrant colour and jaw-dropping animation, lightning fast, beautifully elegant and set to a majestic medieval-style background, the new *Soul Calibur*, while it hasn't exactly evolved the series a great deal, has crystallised into the best fighter money can buy.

GERAINT EVANS



WALLED IN

Another big difference is the introduction of walled arenas. Some are walled all the way around, while others have one side open to be used for Ring Outs. Namco have also exploited this with the inclusion of a wall-jump manoeuvre for some of the more sprightly characters – again, opening up more tactical options.







- The animation.
- Dishing out afters.
- Massive longevity.
- Versus mode.



- The Mission mode can be a little dull.
- Not much different from *Soul Calibur*.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance
Midway
NGC/77 80%
Not a bad effort, but not in the same league as Namco's little beauty…



9 VISUALS
Colourful, beautifully designed with awesome animation.

8 SOUNDS
Rousing music, metal-on-metal FX and on-the-spot battle cries.

9 MASTERY
An expertly crafted fighter – moving at a constant 60fps.

10 LIFESPAN
We played the DC version for four years – this is even better…

VERDICT

Not the jump forward we'd hoped for, but it's the same game refined to near-perfection. As essential a fighter as you're likely to find.



92

"Capcom have tried to do something different"



△ Selecting the right suit for the job is very important. If you don't want to break your thumb, go for a suit with Automatic palm shot.



△ It's like being the star of a playable Colgate advert…



△ …erm, or not. Here's Vanessa taking a face full of laser. Fresh.



△ Imagine the sweat she must wring out of those suits. With all the electrical shocks to the midriff, it beggars belief that she's not been electrocuted – becoming horribly scarred as the rubber lining painfully fuses with her jolting body.

P.N.03

The first of Capcom's Five makes its appearance. And it's not *exactly* what we had in mind…

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	CAPCOM
DEVELOPER	CAPCOM
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW (JAP)
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	5
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£70

A few months ago when we saw the first footage of *P.N.03* we had no idea what to make of it. It looked impressive; clinical, perhaps, but impressive. And the sight of all those beautifully animated mechs and agile backflips from Vanessa Schneider – the game's main character – certainly aroused a great deal of interest. Unfortunately, now that we've got the finished code in the office, we're feeling somewhat underwhelmed.

LORD OF THE DANCE

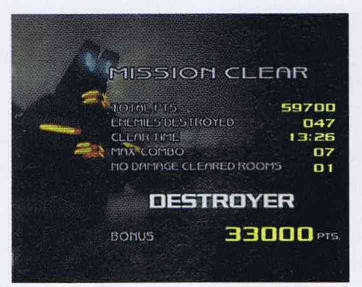
To its detriment, the game starts off poorly. The strange control system takes a lot of getting used to, for a start. Left and right movements on the analogue rotate her, down shuffles her back a step or two, while the shoulder buttons make her pirouette left and right. She automatically locks on to targets that are within range, and the C-



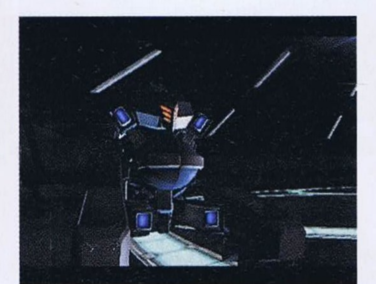
△ As you progress, the enemy bot types and attack patterns increase in complexity.

P.N.03

Oh, what a feeling, when you're dancing and killing robots…



△ The end of each mission: you get a ranking and a number of score criteria.



△ One of the best things about this game are its superb boss battles.



△ Quick taps on the shoulder buttons allow you to dodge incoming missiles – good timing is essential.

DIES OF THE ROBOTS

Your guide to *P.N.03*'s relentless robot-wrecking action…



ON THE LEVEL

Each stage is broken down into a series of rooms. In each area you have to clear out the mechs before moving on to the next. It's easier said than done though…



KNOW YOUR ENEMY

There are only a few robot types, ranging from fast-flying drones to hardy missile-launching walkers that take some serious beating.



STRING 'EM ALONG

Kill an enemy, and you get a time limit in which to kill the next one to increase your combo score. High-scoring combos give you points to spend in the shop.



FACE OFF

By the time you get to the last room, you'll have to face off against a huge boss. Once beaten you can replay the level's rooms in the random Trial mode.

stick slightly adjusts the camera so you can get a better view of enemies above, below and either side of your position. To say it's an unwieldy control scheme is something of an understatement. And, there are countless occasions when confusion with Vanessa's movements leads to her untimely death. Things do improve as you get used to it, but you can't help but feel that it could have been made a little more intuitive.

To confound matters even further, Vanessa's palm shot is very weak and (until you upgrade it) isn't automatic. This means you have to hammer away at the A-button until you're in serious danger of suffering from some wrist-knackering RSI.

> **"PRESENTATION ISSUES ASIDE, THIS IS A SOLID SHOOTER WITH PLENTY OF REPLAY VALUE AND SOME VERY INTERESTING IDEAS"**

PROTOTYPE NUMBER 3

Visually the game is also poor. Jaggies, pixellated environments and some poor clipping all point towards the fact that, like *Viewtiful Joe*, a very small team was working on this game. But although it's by no means polished, and despite the glaring faults, there's a lot to like.

Capcom have had a clear vision with this game, and (presentation issues aside) they've managed to deliver a solid shooter with plenty of replay value and some very interesting ideas. Vanessa, for example, can buy different suits and upgrade them. Changing your suit before a level makes a genuine difference to the way that you play through it. There's also a smart combo system (where you kill enemies in quick succession for extra points), and a brilliant Trial mode that randomly selects rooms from stages you've completed and pieces them together to make brand new levels.

Okay, so it looks rough around the edges, and the techno soundtrack may not be to everyone's tastes, but there's no denying Capcom have tried to do something different, and come up with a unique game that (mostly) pulls it off. If this had spent another year in production, they might have turned out a classic shooter. As it stands, it's only worth considering if you're looking for something between *Ikaruga* sessions.

GERAINT EVANS



BUST A MOVE

While you're fighting, Vanessa will be wiggling around in time to the music. To increase your rating you can use different Energy Drives. These are highly destructive dance moves that are executed with combos on the D-pad, and can take out multiple enemies at a time. Each suit holds a number of Energy Drives that can bought in the game's shop.

+

- Smart concept.
- Uniquely stylised.
- Challenging.
- Good replay value.



–

- Very rough around the edges.
- Unwieldy control.
- Shmup fans only.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Ikaruga
Treasure
NGC/81 85%
Another high-score junky's delight. A much harder and more polished shooter.



7 VISUALS

Genuinely pleasing design, let down by awful jaggies.

8 SOUNDS

Techno and break-beats. Great if you like that sort of thing.



6 MASTERY

Runs smoothly, but visually it's very rough and ready.

8 LIFESPAN

Plenty of high score criteria and an ace random level maker.

VERDICT

A refreshing and unique blaster with smart ideas for shoot-'em-up fans who care more about their score than the visuals.





"Despite righteous wisdom to the contrary, looks get you a long way"

THE POWER
Every blow that hits home rewards you with a star, and once you've collected ten you can trade them in for a power-up item at the flick of a Z-button.

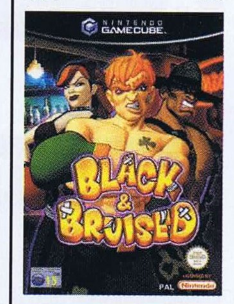
LOOK AT ME!
As game fighters go, these ones look exceedingly tasty indeed. It's just a shame that they seem to have next to no personality. We can't see Kid USA going down in gaming history…

VITALITY
As with almost every other fighting game in the history of fighting games, there's a power meter to whittle down. However, you still need to get the required number of KOs to win.

PLAY THE BACK
The main characters themselves may be swish, and slick, cel-shaded creatures, but the backgrounds and crowds are less refined. In fact, close inspection reveals them to be shoddy…



PUBLISHER	MAJESCO
DEVELOPER	DIGITAL FICTION
RELEASE DATE	NOW (US)
PLAYERS	1-2
MEMORY CARD PAGES	1
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£45



BLACK & BRUISED

Sexy cel-shaded femmes and big butch men slug it out with sucker punches… what more could you ask for?



ooks great, doesn't it? If, say, you saw this on display in the premises of your local retailer of gaming goods, then you'd probably pop over to the running demo and take a closer look at it. And once you were up close and personal with *Black & Bruised* then you'd probably be pretty taken with the sight of those super-stylish cel-shaded visuals. So impressed, in fact, you'd probably pick up that free joypad and have a little go at the fighting action yourself.

When it comes to picking your boxer, you'd probably plump for one of the ladies who feature – you know, just because they're nice to look at – though admittedly girls probably won't go for this. Moving on… once you'd gone through a few random button-presses as you face off against a big fat man, and seen a few blows landed, you'll probably pop the joypad back and think about how nice the visuals were once again. But is that all there really is to the *Black & Bruised* experience?

THE RIGHT COMBINATION

Make no mistake, the fighting system employed here does not require the same studied approach to combat as a Yu Suzuki extravaganza. The A, B, X and Y-buttons correspond to four types of punches, and holding down the right trigger button at the same time produces body shots and uppercuts. And that's it. Combos are available, but random bashing seems to hit home just as much as any futile attempt to make things needlessly elaborate.

But this is a cartoon arcade boxer, so the real skill comes in managing the power-ups you can acquire. Every ten successful punches gives you a power-up, and accumulating 30 punches will give you a level three doozy. By using these items, you can knock an opponent out with one punch, restore your energy, pull off an automatic combo, or increase the speed with which you throw your punches.

Bouts are often won through astute use of the power-ups – ie, do you take first blood, or wait and build up your bonus item into what could be a devastating blow? It's this factor that raises *B&B* above the level of an inane, random button-basher. But only just.

HARD KNOCK LIFE

Refreshingly, there is a Boxer's Life mode, which gives the game a much-needed shot of vigour. Consisting of six short chapter challenges for each character, they see you advance

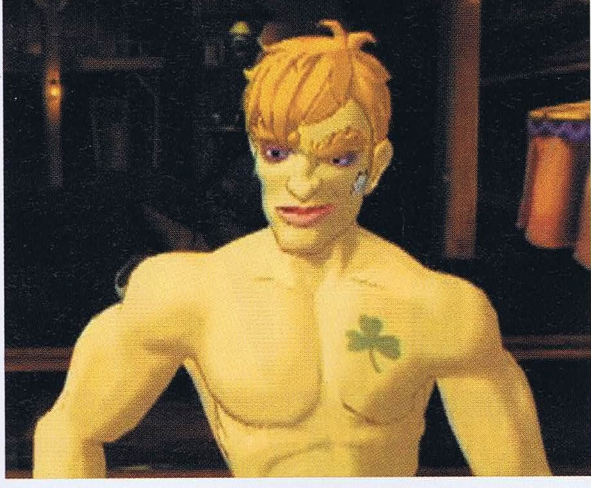


NEW RAGS
Every time you complete a Boxer's Life mode, which is achieved by beating six special challenges that are unlocked as you progress through their own life story, you'll unlock their secondary fighting costume. New they may be, but this does not exactly make them quite the latest thing in snazzy fist-fighting wear. Oh, no.

DID YOU KNOW? Jayne Crouch is a female boxer. And that's about the only thing we know about female boxing!

BLACK & BRUISED

Fearsome fist-fighting all prettied up



△ According to Dan, Mickey McFist is by far the most authentic representation of an Irish person in a videogame to date! To be sure.



△ Ah, the old comedy classic of pitching a small, skinny (but tough) girl against a large, overweight, blubbery man.

STORY TIME

A boxer's life revealed…



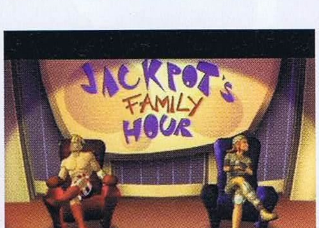
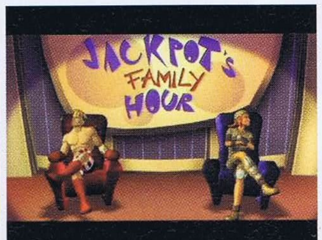
As Ally Gator, you start out in your swampland home. Soon, though, your plans to live in harmony with nature are disturbed by the appearance of…



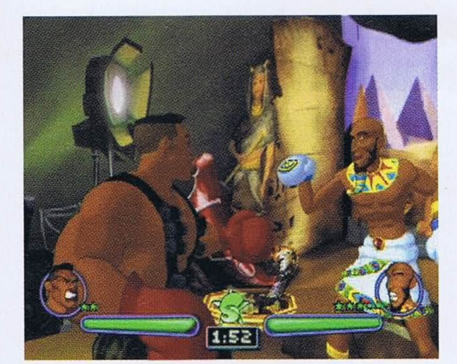
… an irate landlord! Enter Royal Pain – who comes complete with one of those comedy moustaches all British people sport. He wants his dough – now!



Somehow though, the plot goes awry and you end up on a luxury cruise ship, fighting against a hyperactive fitness instructor-type girl.

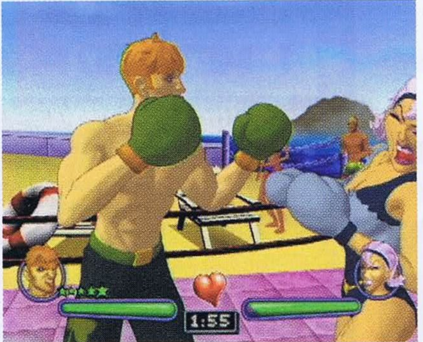
And for a finale? Why, it's a showdown with your brother (of course) who for plot purposes just happens to be fellow fighter Kid USA – on a talk show.



△ "Why, yes, I was based on popular *Street Fighter 2* character Dhalsim, now you mention it…"



△ A spandex pervert. And a supposedly 'English' gentleman. Fighting. In an arena. Wonderful, yes?



△ One for the unreconstructed male – some good old boy-on-girl slapping action.

through each boxer's story via lovely cut-scenes that are unlocked after each successful chapter completion. So, for instance, you may be playing as a swamp woman on the run from a landlord, or as a feisty feminista out to prove she can cut it in the macho world of, er, car maintenance.

The stories themselves are entertaining, although the sporadic use of curse words is unwarranted and seems strangely out of place – and they affect future face-offs. For instance, after four bouts as bike-riding rock chick Holly D Vixen, you're told that fatigue has set in and for the next showdown you'll only be able to punch at half speed. Other gaming handicaps include only using one hand to fight, or having to knock a foe down on the hard concrete in less than 30 seconds.

Sure, six bouts for what is, in essence, a career mode may not sound like very much. But, if you multiply that by the 19 playable characters available, then you've got a nice, fresh approach that will put some longevity into the title. By always keeping the goal of completing a character's story within reach, it's hard to see anyone becoming frustrated with the game to the extent of just giving up.

> "THE FIGHTING SYSTEM DOESN'T NEED THE STUDIED APPROACH OF A YU SUZUKI EXTRAVAGANZA"

TOURNEY!

Along with the self-explanatory Survival mode, the Tournament challenge sees you competing in knock-out tournaments that get progressively more difficult. The first fight is a mere three bouts long, but after that there's no let up and the fights soon pick up in both intensity and length – as is good, and right.

HEY GOOD LOOKIN'

Unfortunately, as an all-out fun-fest of a fighter, *Black & Bruised* fails to match the delights of, say, *Ready 2 Rumble*. The characters aren't as likeable as Afro Thunder and his gang of sparring pals and gals, while, for what is really a cartoon fighting game, the power-ups are lacklustre. Where are the comedy horseshoe-in-gloves?

But it's easy to forgive *Black & Bruised* all its gameplay flaws just because it looks so tasty. And, despite righteous wisdom to the contrary, looks alone can get you a very long way in life. Just ask any MTV VJ. It's just that you usually need a little bit extra up top to go the full distance.

PHILIP MLYNAR

+

- Oh so pretty.
- Compact career modes, great fun to play through.

–

- No real fighting finesse.
- As much depth as a Valley girl.

IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Rocky
Rage
NGC/74 78%
Fulfil that childhood dream of actually 'being' Rocky Balboa.

8 VISUALS

Cel-shading still looks darn tasty eye tucker over here.



4 SOUNDS

Truly awful music, and bouts are strangely quiet.

7 MASTERY

It's slick, but the Cube seems to handle it with ease.

5 LIFESPAN

19 boxer careers to play through, but once they're over…

VERDICT

It looks great, it's fun and the Boxer's Life mode prolongs the gameplay. And did we, erm, mention how wonderful it looks?





FIVE FOR A PRIZE!

Of course, we could easily sit around all day making Top 5 lists, like crazed list-addicted John Cusack. In fact, we often do. But, as ever, we want YOU to do the work now. You've seen the format over the past few months, so send in your own Top 5 lists, children! Mwahahaha...

NGC ESSENTIAL

THE BEST CUBE GAMES MONEY CAN BUY...

TOP FIVE PURPLE THINGS

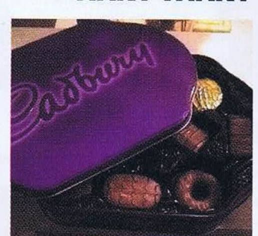
Richard Pennington from Liverpool sent us in his list of top five purple things! Scrapes the barrel a bit when it gets to "purple yoghurt", though. Richard wins a sack of aubergines.



GAMECUBE



TINKY WINKY



CADBURY'S PACKAGING



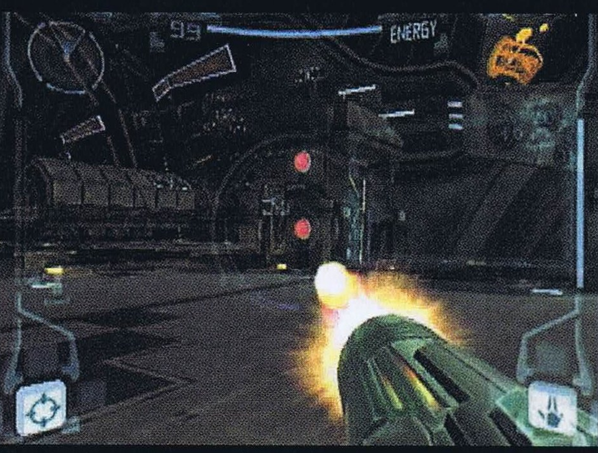
PURPLE CRAYON



PURPLE YOGHURT







1 METROID PRIME — 97

NINTENDO ■ NGC/79

The beleaguered Retro were shoved back on course by the guiding hand of Shigsy to create the sublime *Metroid Prime*, Gamecube's best game so far. Pushes the envelope in every field to produce a polished, eminently playable, stunningly immersive adventure-cum-shooter-cum-platformer that will make you cry when it's over. Classic.



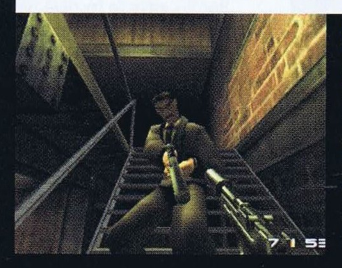
2 SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE — 96



NINTENDO ■ NGC/73

Mazza's cleaning up oily muck on a tropical island put there by an evil villain. With all the intuitiveness, polished visuals, and sense of pure fun of *Mario 64*, this pushes all the right buttons.

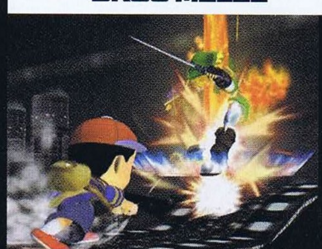
3 TIMESPLITTERS 2 — 92



EIDOS ■ NGC/72

A stonker of a time-travelling FPS with more than a whiff of *GoldenEye*, *Timesplitters 2* crept out of nowhere to officially become Gamecube's finest example of the genre. Wick!

4 SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE — 91



NINTENDO ■ NGC/68

Eye-singeing multiplayer, ingenious moves, cameos from about every Nintendo character ever, and some of the sweetest looks yet squeezed from the Cube.

5 WAVE RACE BLUE STORM — 91



NINTENDO ■ NGC/67

Slight frame-rate problems in PAL, but *Blue Storm* is still a fabulous racer, replete with *the* most incredible water effects ever. Fast, dynamic, accessible and sublime to control.

6 BURNOUT 2 — 90



ACCLAIM ■ NGC/80

B2 takes the best bits of the first game – bum-clenching speed and bone-crunching collisions – and welds them onto more modes than you can eat. A brilliant series refinement.

7 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE — 90



INFOGRAMES ■ NGC/78

Essentially *Gauntlet* with lots of numbers and menu screens, online *PSO* becomes an epic tale of crate-smashing, internet companionship, and fevered item collection. Blork!

8 RESIDENT EVIL — 89



CAPCOM ■ NGC/72

The classic zombie-horror fear-fest recreated to take advantage of the Cube's superior electrical witchcraft. Stunning, mesmerising visuals, unrivalled atmosphere and a brilliant storyline. Controls are still crap, though.

9 ETERNAL DARKNESS



89



NINTENDO ■ NGC/74

A rollicking Lovecraftian yarn of ancient evils, *Eternal Darkness* replaces slick zombie-slaying action with a wonderfully creepy story told through a cast of 12 playable characters, and a truly innovative magic system.

10 CONFLICT DESERT STORM

89

SCI ■ NGC/80

If there's no war on and you're getting withdrawal symptoms, why not try this exemplary soldier sim? Tense and teeth-gritting, with a great tactical co-op mode. Brain-based fun for those nuclear winter evenings.

11 LUIGI'S MANSION

88

NINTENDO ■ NGC/67

With Mazza incarcerated in a haunted house by you-know-who, brother Luigi ushered in the year of the Cube in with this fantastically playable combination of *Super Mario World* and Ghostbusters. It's a little bit short, but still ace.

12 SUPER MONKEY BALL



88

INFOGRAMES ■ NGC/67

Ingenious update of *Marble Madness*. Chuck in a monkey *Mario Kart*, pool, golf and 'springy boxing' and you've got one of the weirdest, most wonderful GC games out there. Great stuff.

13 STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER

87

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/68

Rogue Leader bolts eye-popping renditions of the Battle of Hoth and the Trench Run onto silky-smooth space battles to produce the most memorable – and certainly the best-looking – Star Wars game yet. Well done, Lucas.

14 TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

87



ACTIVISION ■ NGC/67

A no-brainer PS2 conversion, but *TH3* is so good it hardly matters. Packed with mental grinds and stunts, backed up by a mountain of hidden extras and vast skate parks – if you haven't tried *Hawk's* before, now's the time.

15 SSX TRICKY

87

EA ■ NGC/69

Has PS2 written all over it in big, fat neon letters, but still works wonders with your Cube. Fast, spectacular courses, shortcuts and secrets and some mid-piste scrappage make this conversion brilliant, *brilliant* entertainment.

16 LOST KINGDOMS

86

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/70

CCG-ing comes to the Cube in this accomplished RPG, in which you collect cards and battle mythical monsters in pretty fantasy landscapes. Might not sound like much, but *Lost Kingdoms* is far more than the sum of its parts.

17 NFL 2K3

86



INFOGRAMES ■ NGC/79

A meaty slice of gridiron sim that's a genuine threat to the towering *Madden* franchise, *NFL 2K3* has bagfuls of management roughage that doesn't detract from the gameplay. Tough as old boots, but well worth the effort.

18 PIKMIN

85



NINTENDO ■ NGC/69

Created using textures from Shigsy's own garden, *Pikmin* is a wonderful real-time strategy with multi-coloured vegetables, beautifully simple controls and expansive, tactile worlds. Over a bit quickly, but this is still Nintendo genius.

19 RESIDENT EVIL ZERO

85





CAPCOM ■ NGC/78

Twice the guns, twice the fun? *Resi Zero* ditches the old solo formula for a two-character system. Great set-pieces, looks lovely – basically, it's more *Resi*. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. Well, apart from the crap controls. You can fix those.

20 IKARUGA

85



INFOGRAMES ■ NGC/80

A classically old-style shooter designed for robots, *Ikaruga* is now available for human consumption. There may be only five levels of it, but it's so infuriatingly hardcore you'll have grown a beard before you get past the first boss.

TOP TEN GBA GAMES

1 ADVANCE WARS
A cute-looking turn-based strategy game it may be, but underneath is a frighteningly addictive, super-challenging masterpiece that'll hook anyone experiencing it. Frankly, one of the best games we've played.

2 METROID FUSION
Everything that has ever made *Metroid* great can be found here. A sprawling environment littered with baddies and an imposing difficulty level. It has a great link-up feature with *Prime* too.

3 SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 2
This slightly tweaked version of the SNES classic boasts a massive game world and some of the tightest level designs ever. Stone-cold classic.

4 YOSHI'S ISLAND
Stunning level design, fiendish puzzles and secrets all topped off with some beautiful pastel-shaded visuals. Another essential 2D platformer for GBA.

5 SUPER MARIO KART ADVANCE
Much like the superb SNES original: burn around multi-coloured tracks dishing out justice with weapons.

6 STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3
An incredible conversion of one of the best fighters ever. Massive single-player and a brilliant two-player experience.

7 BROKEN SWORD
Perfect for those long journeys. A gripping storyline, sharp, sarcastic dialogue, some sweet visuals and a more efficient control system.

8 CASTLEVANIA HARMONY OF DISSONANCE
More accessible than its previous GBA outing, this is classic *'Vania*. Imaginative bosses, a steep challenge and very atmospheric.

9 BALLISTIC ECKS VS SEVER 2
Hands-down the best FPS on GBA. Technically brilliant, and both easier on the eye and more engaging than *Doom*.

10 GRADIUS ADVANCE
The best shooter on GBA, and it's doubtful many will ever get close. Classic *Gradius* gameplay, with innovative levels and fantastic bosses.

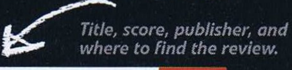
NGC DIRECTORY

Your at-a-glance guide to everything the Cube has to offer…

HOW IT ALL WORKS

A little screenshot of the game in question…

Title, score, publisher, and where to find the review.



DONALD RUMSFELD'S TOM CLANCY'S OIL WAR XXXVII 66



USA! USA! USA! ■ NGC/911
Hilariously one-sided RTS. Re-branded by the Committee for Un-American Activities after Clancy was suspected of "going a bit soft".

A brief outline of what to expect and whether you should consider it…

18 WHEELER PRO AMERICAN TRUCKER — 48



ACCLAIM ■ NGC/68
Drive your truck from A to B and avoid 'smokey'. A bit like *Out Run* with 'rigs', but the arcade version with the sit-in cabinet was better.

2002 FIFA WORLD CUP — 30



EA ■ NGC/69
About as much fun as being told your parents have been crushed to death in a horrific car crash. And then contracting Weil's Disease.

ACE GOLF — 74



EIDOS ■ NGC/74
A highly enjoyable, relaxing sticksie-ball game that treads a pleasant middle-ground between fun and serious.

AGGRESSIVE INLINE — 81



ACTIVISION ■ NGC/72
Gentle *Tony Hawk's* alterno-clone – this time you're skating around massive arenas, 'busting' tricks on a pair of them there 'roller-boots'.

ATV QUAD POWER RACING 2 — 70



ACCLAIM ■ NGC/77
Wave Race on land with bouncy farming utility vehicles. Competent enough, but there's plenty of superior racing fare out there.

BARBARIAN — 70



VIRGIN ■ NGC/72
A button-mashing fantasy battler complete with fully-smashable arenas. Fun for a while – but it's not as good as *Smash Bros.*

BATMAN VENGEANCE — 70



UBI SOFT ■ NGC/67
Cel-shaded platforming cartoon bat-action. One of the first Cube games that came out – but it's looking pretty ropey already.

BEACH SPIKERS — 79



INFOGRAMES ■ NGC/72
Volleyball, as played on sand. Brilliantly addictive with four players, but the single-player's longevity lets the side down.

BIG AIR FREESTYLE — 28



INFOGRAMES ■ NGC/75
Yet another awful off-road bike title. The kind of game that makes you want to cry the second you've started playing. Don't bother.

BLOOD OMEN 2 LEGACY OF KAIN — 72



EIDOS ■ NGC/77
Gamecube's other undead hack-fest. After 1,000 years of slumber, evil vampire lord Kain is awake and hungry. Breakfast, anyone?

BLOOD RAYNE — 65



MAJESCO ■ NGC/79
Vampire fun. Dismember Nazis, fire a staggering array of period weaponry, and battle an *evil priest* driving an *armoured pulpit*. Yup.

BLOODY ROAR: PRIMAL FURY — 74



ACTIVISION ■ NGC/68
Competent-enough morphing-into-animals fighting shenanigans, but *Capcom vs SNK* and *Mortal Kombat* have since surpassed it.

BMX XXX — 48



ACCLAIM ■ NGC/76
Childish, boring BMX game featuring pneumatically-enhanced strippers showing you their nipples. Get a girlfriend instead.

BOMBERMAN GENERATIONS — 70



VIVENDI ■ NGC/76
Yet another update of the venerable arson franchise. Single-player is enjoyable if a little tedious; four-player is as addictive as it ever was.

BURNOUT — 86



ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67
With bone-splintering, spectacular crashes and twitchy, inch-perfect handling, *Burnout* is a dream of a game, even if it's over a bit quickly.

CAPCOM VS SNK 2 EO — 79



CAPCOM ■ NGC/72
A great game, but purist retro freaks will want to fork out for one of those enormous, clunky arcade sticks to get the most from it…

TOP FIVE SONGS JOHNNY CASH WILL PROBABLY COVER ON HIS NEXT ALBUM

BABY GOT BACK
Cash wearily declares his chronic addiction to "big butts" over a plaintive pedal steel melody, asserting that we, his "other brothers" cannot "deny that a girl with an itty-bitty waist putting that round thing in your face" is a tantalising, yet painful pleasure.

THE MODEL
Kraftwerk's sparse robot-music classic becomes a minimalist tale of unrequited love and tortuous German grammatical conventions. Who else could make lines like "She's posing for consumer products now and then/for every camera she gives the best she can" sound so harrowing?

SMACK MY BITCH UP
The Prodigy's controversial clubbing clubbing anthem, turned into a sombre tale of canine heroin addiction by the Man in Black. Includes some of Cash's best mouth-organ work to date.

SCATMAN
Even sadder than A Boy Named Sue. Cash has made this song his own, a ballad of a man whose every word turns to actual excrement and falls from his mouth in great, leaden clumps, staining his shirt and causing nearby people to vomit.

RING OF FIRE
Cash's techno cover version of Frank Zappa's reggae cover version of Cash's original version. The aural equivalent of that tunnel effect you get when you point a video camera at the screen it's hooked up to. Innovative.

CEL DAMAGE — 60



EA ■ NGC/66
Silly cel-shaded car-combat game in the vein of violent Warner Bros cartoons. Far too manic and confusing for its own good.

CRASH BANDICOOT THE WRATH OF CORTEX — 40



VIVENDI ■ NGC/75
One of the worst ports we've seen – and of a game that was a stinking load of crap to begin with, too! Avoid like death himself.

CRAZY TAXI — 70



ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67
Ancient title that's so old it's now been included as one of the minigames in *GTAIII*. Creaky graphics, but still good fun.

DAKAR 2 — 79



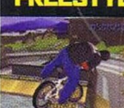
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/80
Driving around in a vast expanse of dirt, all on your own, for days on end? *Dakar 2* somehow manages to make this into pretty good fun.

DARK SUMMIT — 51



THQ ■ NGC/69
Think *SSX Tricky* but with all the speed, style and entertainment removed with near-surgical precision. A waste of time.

DAVE MIRRA 2 FREESTYLE BMX — 75



ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67
Pornography-free moto-cross game that's actually good. Slick, smooth with big arenas – but this will only appeal to the BMX hardcore.

DEFENDER — 50



MIDWAY ■ NGC/79
Rather pointless 3D update that makes one of the hardest-core arcade classics really easy, and by extension, depressingly dull.

DIE HARD VENDETTA — 80



VIVENDI ■ NGC/74
Wear a vest and shoot holes in people who look like terrorists, so America can enjoy one more night of guiltless slumber. Sweary.

DISNEY'S MAGICAL MIRROR — 26



DISNEY ■ NGC/73
A cruel form of torture as The Mouse patronises his way through this hideous 'adventure'. Almost Beckettian in its non-eventfulness.

DISNEY SPORTS FOOTBALL — 69

KONAMI ■ NGC/76
Oddly enough, this isn't anywhere near as bad as you may think. It's an amusing, simple footie game, ideal for younger gamers.

DISNEY SPORTS SKATEBOARDING — 64



KONAMI ■ NGC/80
The Mouse and his irritating friends have a crack at busting tricks on half-pipes. Walt must be spinning in his cryogenic storage-pod by now.

DONALD DUCK GOIN' QUACKERS — 32



UBI SOFT ■ NGC/68
A bit like *Crash Bandicoot*, except with The Duck in charge, wearing a sailor's costume and going bthackakackthh. Also total rubbish.

DOSHIN THE GIANT — 62



NINTENDO ■ NGC/74
Quirky title that puts you in charge of a giant schizophrenic yellow man who must help/hinder indigenous islanders. A little short-lived.

DRIVEN — 60



BAM ■ NGC/68
Very basic, very short game of the appalling film about driving fast in a large circle. Filling up bargain bins worldwide as we speak.

DR MUTO — 70



MIDWAY ■ NGC/79
Amusing mad-doctor platforming game where you have to mutate into different animals to solve puzzles. Science is fun after all!

EGGO MANIA — 49



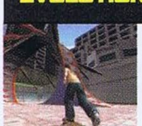
KEMCO ■ NGC/72
Rubbish take on *Tetris* that, mystifyingly, involves ovulations. Wouldn't look out of place on an Amiga. Pointless in every way.

ESPN INTERNATIONAL WINTER SPORTS 2002 — 37



KONAMI ■ NGC/67
Winter sports game combining tiresome button-mashing antics with equally dull timing and precision exercises. Dull.

EVOLUTION SKATEBOARDING — 78



KONAMI ■ NGC/79
Snazzy-looking *Hawk's*-clone, but then, as they said in the old Galaxy ads, why have cotton when you can have silk? Or something like that.

EVOLUTION SNOWBOARDING — 23



KONAMI ■ NGC/79
Fight bad guys while sliding down a mountain on a tray. Somehow even worse than *Dark Summit*. Games like these should be made illegal.

EXTREME G 3 — 85

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67
A bit of an underrated gem, *XG 3* offers pulse-shattering speed, huge, tracks, some ingenious weaponry and eye-spanking visuals.

TOP FIVE ANIME THAT SHOULD BE MADE INTO GAMECUBE GAMES



BLUE GENDER
Where you run around shooting giant insectoid creatures. Would make a great first-person shooter, although it's a pretty average show.

TENCHI MUYO
Could be a *Harvest Moon* clone – play as Tenchi and try to win the hearts of the girls who live with you, or alternatively play as one of the ladies, sabotaging any of the other girls' efforts to get Tenchi.

COWBOY BEBOP
Play as bounty hunters Jet, Spike, or Faye in this third-person action shooter. Go around capturing anyone one with a bounty on their heads, or go after Vicious and the syndicate leaders.

GUNBUSTER
Similar to the Gundam titles, pilot the Gunbuster or RX 7 mecha as you defend the earth from the alien threat. Stompy.

NEON GENESIS EVANGELION
Play as one of the three selected children and defend humanity from Angel attack, or play as one of the Angels and try to defeat the Evangelions, then wipe out the human race.

Christopher Martin from Framalamaland wins some strange Japanese comics we found in Geraint's desk. Send us your address, moron! Address! Address! Address!

F1 2002 — 67



EA ■ NGC/71
Rock-hard racing simulator your dad will enjoy. Also features humourless German driving robot M Schumacher version 1.0.

FIFA 2003 — 83



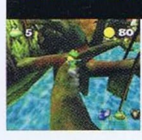
EA ■ NGC/75
EA finally remember how good football games are made. Actually a bit better than *ISS 2*. Need we say it's also a vast improvement?

FIREBLADE — 59



MIDWAY ■ NGC/77
Nondescript brain-free helicopter game that will appeal to military memorabilia-collecting psychos and likers of bad 80s Vietnam 'movies'.

FROGGER BEYOND — 59



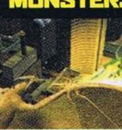
KONAMI ■ NGC/80
The current trend of 'improving' ancient games by making them 3D taken to its most extreme conclusion. Functional gaming.

GAUNTLET: DARK LEGACY — 25



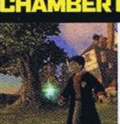

MIDWAY ■ NGC/68
We'd be far more comfortable with this travesty if we'd had it inserted rectally. An insult to the legacy of a venerable arcade classic.

GODZILLA: DESTROY ALL MONSTERS MELEE — 68



INFOGRAMES ■ NGC/74
Lots of good stompy, building-smashing monster fun in multiplayer mode, but otherwise a little weak. Get *Smash Bros* instead.

HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS — 78



EA ■ NGC/75
Attractive and competent enough adaptation of Potter's film – but rather easy with it. Only die-hard speccy wizard fans need apply.

HOT WHEELS: VELOCITY X — 45



THQ ■ NGC/75
Basic racing/car-combat game based on plastic toys. Perhaps even coded in basic. Strictly for the very, very young. Or very stupid.

ISS 2 — 83




KONAMI ■ NGC/68
A winning formula mystifyingly tarnished with unnecessary 'improvements'. Still good – but also a step backwards.

JAMES BOND 007 AGENT UNDER FIRE — 70



EA ■ NGC/70
Slog around workaday gameplay in off-the-peg shooter upholstery, shooting baddies with ping-pong balls. Strangely unsatisfying.

JAMES BOND 007: NIGHTFIRE — 72

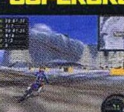
EA ■ NGC/75
The best Bond game on GC so far – and done with some flair – but tasty visuals can't hide an FPS that's a little lacking overall.

JEDI KNIGHT II — 67



ACTIVISION ■ NGC/75
A seriously disappointing PC conversion of an overrated shooter. Huge game, but quite tedious. Does little to improve on *Dark Forces*.

JEREMY MCGRATH SUPERCROSS WORLD — 20



ACCLAIM ■ NGC/69
Like a horrible nightmare about doing cross-country wearing nothing but steel-wool pants and barbed-wire flip-flops.

JIMMY NEUTRON BOY GENIUS — 18



THQ ■ NGC/78
Tedious, sorry, devoid-of-inspiration 'puzzle' game ('Y'know – for kids!') that actually manages to out-borify *Universal Studios*.

KELLY SLATER'S PRO SURFER — 75



ACTIVISION ■ NGC/73
Same old nutritious trick-based extreme-sports diet as usual, but this time in tubes made of water. Actually quite good fun, for a while.

KNOCKOUT KINGS 2003 — 79



EA ■ NGC/75
If the more arcadey nature of *Rocky* doesn't sit all that well with you, then it's worth giving this face-smashing simulator a go.

LEGENDS OF WRESTLING — 47



ACCLAIM ■ NGC/69
The gimmick of bringing back old-skool 'rasslers' is nowhere near enough to make this any good. A shambolic licensing cash-cow.

LEGENDS OF WRESTLING II — 50



ACCLAIM ■ NGC/76
Practically the same game as above. Yet another travesty of a wrestling game, made only marginally better thanks to the likes of Big Daddy.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS THE TWO TOWERS — 68



EA ■ ISSUE 78
Repetitive hacking game with faint RPG overtones. Guide your man through endless levels making goblin prosciutto and orc sausages.

MARIO PARTY 4 — 68



NINTENDO ■ NGC/75
Disappointing stuff. It's not bad if you're in the mood for board-game party fun, but it's done very little to improve on the originals.



DIRECTORY

Every Gamecube game ever… rated!

MAT HOFFMAN'S PRO BMX 2 — 70



ACTIVISION ■ NGC/75
Another decent-enough extreme sports sim. A bit slicker than *Dave Mirra*, but with smaller, tighter arenas. Does the job.

MEDAL OF HONOR FRONTLINE — 74





EA ■ NGC/75
Saving Private Ryan-style FPS set during World War II. Looks rather ropey in places, but it's atmospheric and highly enjoyable.

MEN IN BLACK II ALIEN ESCAPE — 45





INFOGRAMES ■ NGC/78
Rubbish off-the-peg third-person shooting game of the rubbish off-the-peg movie sequel. Did we say it was rubbish?

MICRO MACHINES — 57





INFOGRAMES ■ NGC/78
Like the recipe for bread or wine gums, *Micro Machines* doesn't change much, and this iteration is certainly no exception…

MINORITY REPORT — 39





ACTIVISION ■ NGC/77
Astonishingly brutal third-rate ass-whupping game that takes place on the sets of a Spielberg movie. Utterly, relentlessly violent.

MORTAL KOMBAT DEADLY ALLIANCE — 80





MIDWAY ■ NGC/77
The best *Kombat* yet! The spine-ripping, blood-feasting yarn finally gets the update it deserves on Gamecube. Finish him!

MX SUPERFLY — 63





THQ ■ NGC/73
An MX game that handles like you're driving space bikes on the surface of the moon. The best of a very bad bunch, though.

MYSTIC HEROES — 71





THQ ■ NGC/75
Simplistic, repetitive 3D *Gauntlet*-style slash-'em-up that's somehow strangely entertaining and charming. Well, Geraint thinks so.

NBA COURTSIDE 2002 — 79



NINTENDO ■ NGC/68
The second-best basketball sim available, but it's still lacking somewhat. Strictly for hardcore fans of the Ball of B.

NBA 2K3 — 85



INFOGRAMES ■ NGC/79
A titan of a basketball game that puts all others to shame. Great gameplay complements a brilliantly engrossing career mode.

NBA LIVE 2003 — 70





EA ■ NGC/75
The predictable common-or-garden yearly EA update. Solid gameplay; lots and lots of lovely numbers; not much different from last year.

NEED FOR SPEED 2 HOT PURSUIT — 69



EA ■ NGC/74
Ironically slow, sluggish, speed-free racer. Yet another lazy port that's ruined what was originally a pretty entertaining franchise.

NHL 2003 — 64



EA ■ NGC/75
A more realistic approach to ice hockey which, while decent enough, isn't particularly fast or – more importantly – fun.

NHL 2K3 — 72



INFOGRAMES ■ NGC/80
Massively complicated ice hockey title, with stodgy and unwieldy gameplay. In a similar vein to *NFL 2K3*, but doesn't quite pull it off.

NHL HITZ 20-02 — 79



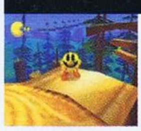
MIDWAY ■ NGC/67
Exaggerated ice hockey title in a similar vein to Midway's *Red Card*, where the sticks aren't just there for hitting the puck.

NHL HITZ 20-03 — 65



MIDWAY ■ NGC/74
Another year, another dose of frantic ice action. Still better than EA's take on the game – not much cop on the original, mind.

PAC-MAN WORLD 2 — 70



EA ■ NGC/78
The Pac is back for some hilarious retro-themed platforming fun. Shamelessly pilfers absolutely everything from *Mario 64*.

PRO RALLY 2002 — 58



UBI SOFT ■ NGC/74
An okay game completely and ruthlessly dragged down by its thoroughly awful, frustrating handling. Leave well alone.

PRO TENNIS WTA TOUR — 48



KONAMI ■ NGC/74
The only tennis game on Gamecube so far, but with rubbish non-analogue controls and some distinctly whiffy visuals.

RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP — 74



SCI ■ NGC/78
Surprisingly solid, does nearly all the things a rallying game should. Should do the job until *Colin McCrae* finally sees the light of day.

TOP FIVE HAIR PRODUCTS



HAIR GEL
Obvious, really – without it people like Gareth Gates would look, if possible, even more irritating. Also good to cover little childrens' eyes with while they sleep.

COMB
Very handy. Can be used in conjunction with hair gel (see above) to make your hair look like a farm at harvest time.

ELASTIC HAIRBANDS
These hold long hair together, and make bald women appear like they have more of it. Also used by 1980s men (*Or 2000s Paul – Ed*) to create 'pony-tails' (these have nothing to do with actual ponies).

HAIR SPRAY
Basically a very weak gel substance, used to hold lots of hair in a flexible position. Spray directly into face for best results.

HEAD WAX
It doesn't matter what kind – they all give that shiny effect. Dazzle people with a shiny bald head for instant skull-mirror effect.

Jason Leeming from **Lancashire** wins a pink Hello Kitty hairbrush with some of Paul's hair in it, and a sachet of V05 conditioner that fell out of a magazine.

RAYMAN 3: HOODLUM HAVOC — 84



UBI SOFT ■ NGC/78
The limbless floppy-haired French Freak™ has the last laugh with a Rayman game that, insists our correspondent, is actually good.

RED CARD 20-03 — 78



MIDWAY ■ NGC/71
Violent football game where you mince opponents with stud and fist until the meat shows. Should be called *Roy Keane's Red Card 20-03*.

REIGN OF FIRE — 59



BAM ■ NGC/76
A poor game of an equally poor film, even if you do get to burn stuff. Some nice ideas ruined by dodgy physics and controls.

ROBOTECH: BATTLECRY — 77



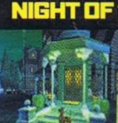
TDK ■ NGC/77
Stompy king-size robots go to war in the game of the crazy Japanese cartoon franchise. Not bad at all, as far as stompy robot games go.

ROCKY — 78



RAGE ■ NGC/74
A solid fighter where you guide Rockys one through five to punching greatness. Great two-player, loads of unlockable extras.

SCOOBY DOO NIGHT OF 100 FRIGHTS! — 36



THQ ■ NGC/74
Platforming non-action that will hold your interest no longer than half an hour, or until you need to go to the toilet; whichever comes first.

THE SCORPION KING — 30



VIVENDI ■ NGC/75
Bad. Very bad. Guide a poor approximation of The Rock around and hit bad guys over and over until they bleed from the eyeholes.

SEGA SOCCER SLAM — 67



INFOGRAMES ■ NGC/74
Another cartoonish footie game with a major interest in violence and OTT moves. Cracking in multiplayer – poor on your own.

THE SIMPSONS: ROAD RAGE — 52



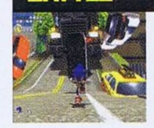
EA ■ NGC/68
A really quite bad *Crazy Taxi* rip-off, with various Simpsons characters bolted on, spewing repetitive 'funny' one-liners.

THE SIMS — 81

EA ■ NGC/79
Highly addictive people simulating comes to the Cube. A great sense of humour and endless potential for interior decoration and/or mischief.

SMUGGLER'S RUN WARZONES — 78

ROCKSTAR ■ NGC/73
Impressive, hee-uge landscapes and fast-paced 'racing' in buggies and jeeps are let down by repetitive gameplay and awful robot music.

SONIC ADVENTURE 2 BATTLE — 70

INFOGRAMES ■ NGC/67
Sega's annoying mascot on Gamecube, now with an extra dimension added for some reason. Does anyone care anymore?

SONIC MEGA COLLECTION — 70

INFOGRAMES ■ NGC/79
If you have a hopeless retro arcade problem, you could do worse: seven Sonic games on one disc, accurate down to even the loading times!

SPIDER-MAN: THE MOVIE — 72

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/69
Dodgy control and camera issues are the only problems with this enjoyable platform adventure. Voiced by the original cast, too.

SPY HUNTER — 55

MIDWAY ■ NGC/68
Appalling frame-rate, nasty course design and dull linear racing make this one to avoid. Yet another pointless, crappy remake.

SPYRO: ENTER THE DRAGONFLY — 40

VIVENDI ■ NGC/75
Much like *Crash Bandicoot*, this is another shoddy port of a game that was never really much fun in the first place.

STAR WARS BOUNTY HUNTER — 68

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/77
The panting, pot-bellied, totally rubbish space-assassin gets the *Tomb Raider* treatment in this distinctly average game.

STAR WARS THE CLONE WARS — 71
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/75
Enjoyable *Battlezone*-style tank blaster set around Episode II – not quite as good as *Rogue Leader*, but still fun all the same.

STARFOX ADVENTURES — 72

NINTENDO ■ NGC/74
Disappointing adventure that's way too easy and linear. Not awful, but should have been far better. Hardly a fitting send-off for Rare, either.

THE SUM OF ALL FEARS — 25

UBI SOFT ■ NGC/76
One of the most technically inept games we've ever played. Clancy says bury the copies in the Arizona desert before anyone notices.

CELEBRITY TOP FIVE SENSE TALK™!

…with **Trip Hawkins**, founder, Electronic Arts…

WOMEN
"You'll get to build a collection of girlfriends like a bunch of Pokémon. We've decided to take the approach of having the girlfriends be real women."

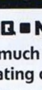
PLASTIC SOLDIERS
"What we're trying to do with *Sarge's War* is make the whole thing look more realistic. There are better-looking graphics and grittier scenery. He's got more dirt and sweat on his plastic body. You still have the plastic soldier thing – it feels more gritty and realistic. I think that's probably a good trend line."

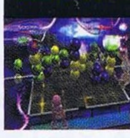
AUDIENCES
"You want to shoot for the mainstream audience, which is older and more mature and has more mature tastes, even if they don't necessarily have the age on their driver's licence to back it up."

GAMES
"I have always felt that great games need to be simple, hot and deep. And that's the same philosophy with 3DO game brands such as *Army Men, Battletanx, Heroes of Might and Magic*, and *High Heat Baseball*."

VEGETABLES
"As a native Californian I have to go with avocados and artichokes."

Trip Hawkins from California wins a copy of *Army Men's Greatest Hits* for Game Boy Color. Were such a collection to actually exist.

SUMMONER A GODDESS REBORN — 68

THQ ■ NGC/79
As much levelling-up and numbers floating out of people's heads that you can eat. Crappy visuals, but a sprawling, engrossing adventure.

SUPER BUBBLE POP — 65

JALECO ■ NGC/78
Kind of *Tetris*-y flavoured *Bust-a-Move* for the Sunny Delight generation, with chemically-induced visuals and music. Wick.

SUPER MONKEY BALL 2 — 82

INFOGRAMES ■ NGC/78
The apes are back with levels even harder of core, and a mental new story mode involving love, betrayal and heinous banana-theft.

TARZAN FREERIDE — 59

UBI SOFT ■ NGC/67
Disney. Platformer. Do we really need to say any more? Workaday, jungle-based gameplay with the Seventh Earl of Greystoke.

TAZ WANTED — 52

INFOGRAMES ■ NGC/72
Some of the worst level design we've ever seen in this middling, frustrating cel-shaded *Mario*-wannabe platformer.

TETRIS WORLDS — 38

THQ ■ NGC/73
THQ manage to ruin one of the Best Games Ever by trying to make it 'better'. Again. Will anyone stop these people before it's too late?

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2003 — 82

EA ■ NGC/75
The world most efficient golf robot gets his own game. Actually really good, in a surprisingly arcadey way. Nice graphics, too.

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON — 66

UBI SOFT ■ NGC/79
Clancy has yet another go at squad-based tactical ops, and this time things run a little bit more smoothly. Entertaining stuff.

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4 — 85

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/75
No time limits (hurrah!) and some great RPG elements and minigames complement the larger areas in *TH4* – a well-tweaked fourquel.

TOP GUN: COMBAT ZONES — 71
VIRGIN ■ NGC/72
Tail-riding, wingman-being movie-based flyboy antics. GC's only flight 'sim' – pretty challenging, but we recommend you try it first.

TUROK EVOLUTION — 71

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/73
Relatively disappointing dino-hunting FPS sequel. Not as bad as *Turok 3* on the N64, but serious niggles let the series down badly.

TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER — 60

EA ■ NGC/76
As average a platformer as you'll find, with an Antipodean twist. It's a solid example of the genre but nothing more or less.

UFC THROWDOWN — 51

UBI SOFT ■ NGC/73
Highly amusing freestyle thump-fest, where you lead your oily, grunting man to victory in some vague Greek-style athletic contest.

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS — 24

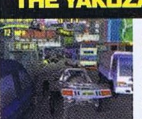
KEMCO ■ NGC/67
Anyone who makes a game that has you picking up rubbish deserves to be shot in the kneecaps, stuffed into a suitcase and hurled into the sea.

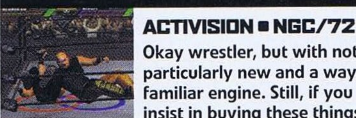
VIRTUA STRIKER 3 V2002 — 55

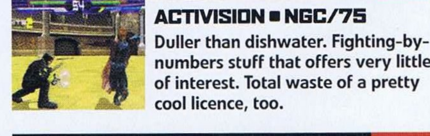
INFOGRAMES ■ NGC/69
Nice to look at, horrible to play. Rubbish AI and unwieldy controls make for a crap game of footie. Did we say it looked nice?

WORMS BLAST — 63

UBI SOFT ■ NGC/74
Annelids go to war (again). Kinda like *Bust-a-Move* in a puzzly-action kind of way, except this isn't anywhere near as good.

WRECKLESS THE YAKUZA MISSIONS — 51

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/75
Drive around like a lunatic and smash up cars and everything else that gets in your way. Sub-*Burnout* road-accident nonsense.

WWE WRESTLEMANIA X8 — 70

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/72
Okay wrestler, but with nothing particularly new and a way-too-familiar engine. Still, if you must insist in buying these things…

X-MEN: NEXT DIMENSION — 55

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/75
Duller than dishwater. Fighting-by-numbers stuff that offers very little of interest. Total waste of a pretty cool licence, too.

ZOOCUBE — 50
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/71
Insane puzzle game involving a rotating cube that sucks in orbiting animal parts and goes 'moo', 'oink', 'roar', 'quack' and sometimes 'wah!'

GEAR

Extreme GBA link-up action, the SP carry case that integrates with popular brands of climbing gear and big-screen fun.

WHAT IS A BEST BUY?

Every month we'll pick out one piece of kit that stands head and shoulders above the rest and award it our coveted Best Buy badge. A Best Buy will combine superb quality with fantastic value for money – when we hand something a reward like that, you'll know it's worth investing in.

NGC BEST BUY



NGC BEST BUY

GAME BOY PLAYER

FROM NINTENDO • ¥5,000 (£26) JAPANESE IMPORT

Fed up of squinting at your GBA, or holding it at an uncomfortable angle to catch the optimum light on that murky old screen? Buy a GBA SP then. Alternatively, if portable gaming isn't a priority for you, there's this excellent Gamecube add-on that lets you play any Game Boy title on the eye-soothing comfort of your living room TV.

It docks with the hi-speed port on the bottom of the Gamecube, locking into position with a couple of screws. Then you just load up the special GB Player disc and in barely ten seconds your Gamecube is transformed into a GBA.

The picture quality is excellent. When you press the Z-button a set of menu options comes up. These allow you to choose from three display settings – soft, sharp or normal – which don't seem to have a dramatic effect on anything, and scale the picture to fit the full screen. At the default setting there's a small border running all the way around the edge, which you can fill with one of 20 built-in wallpaper patterns.

Strangely enough, there's also the option to set a timer for anything up to 60 minutes. When the time elapses, a warning pops up at the bottom of the screen to inform you how long you've been playing, and it then disappears after a few seconds.

Other menu options let you alter the button configuration (you can use a real GBA as a controller, via a GC link cable) and swap cartridges without having to reset the console. The eject mechanism is a little lever on the side, which makes the cart shoot clean out of the slot.

Basically, it does everything a real GBA does, except fit in your pocket. Playing *Mario Kart Super Circuit* using a GC controller is a real treat, but even games like that, which look crisp on the small screen, come out looking a bit chunky when blown up and plastered across a massive TV.

BETTER THAN...



EYE STRAIN

FROM A STANDARD GBA • £FREE

With all the classic SNES updates available for GBA, the GB Player is retro heaven. And it works on a UK console via Freeloader/Action Replay.





UK VERSION?: Currently the GB Player is only available on import. A UK date hadn't been confirmed at the time of writing, although it's definitely on the way. We'd advise waiting – it's just £26 in Japan, but our imported one cost us £78! Ouch!



MACRO KIT FOR GAME BOY SP

FROM MAD CATZ ● £20
CONTACT 01908 255525

When you've got a nice, metallic games machine to play with, you wouldn't want to spoil its good looks by sticking it in a crappy old plastic case. So this bundle includes a metallic box that looks a bit like something you might find at the cosmetics counter in Debenhams. It smells like toxic foam rubber rather than expensive French perfume, but it'll certainly make you stand out from the crowd. You also get an adaptor for powering an SP in the car, which seems like a good idea, and a headphone connector with a pass-through socket, so you can listen at the same as you recharge. Finally, there's a set of plasticky earphones with a retractable cord that's less powerful than than the Finger Bruiser below, but still capable of blackening the thumbnails of the unwary. The whole set comes colour co-ordinated to match your SP.

BETTER THAN...



STARTER PACK FOR GBA SP
FROM THRUSTMASTER ● £15
A similar sort of thing, but not as pretty and featuring a headphone adaptor that's actually a USB plug. Complete and utter shite.

FINGER BRUISER

FROM MAD CATZ ● £6
CONTACT 01908 255525

Otherwise known as the Retrax Multi-link Cable, and it does link two GBAs as well as anything else. But push the button to retract the spring-loaded cable, and you can expect the solid plugs on the end to whip back at the speed of sound, cracking you across a random part of your hand. After much experimentation, we've found that it's most painful when it gets you on the thumbnail, and slightly less if it just smacks your knuckles. Everyone in the **NGC** office has had great fun proving their manliness by daring to press the button. So much so, that one half of it is now broken and refuses to retract at all. Hope it's still under warranty.

WORSE THAN...



ANY OTHER LINK CABLE
FROM ANYONE ● £5 - £15
Ordinary link cables don't have the bone-cracking power of the mighty Retrax, but they do possess the advantage of not having a giant lump of plastic dangling between linked machines.

MICRO KIT FOR GBA SP

FROM MAD CATZ ● £15 ● CONTACT 01908 255525

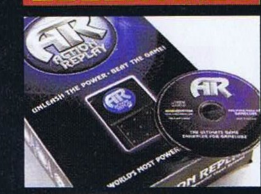
Ever wanted to take your GBA SP on a spot of mountaineering but lacked the necessary equipment to ensure its safety? This snazzy case will keep it warm in the event of being stranded halfway up Ben Nevis, and includes a handy carabiner for binding it to ropes. It's marked 'not for climbing' so to test its strength we took a nylon cord and tied one end to the carabiner, and the other around Geraint's neck, then made him jump from a second storey window. To our surprise the device held firm, preventing the Welshman from hitting the floor. This bundle also includes three game pak cases and the thickest, heaviest mag lens you'll find outside of Patrick Moore's telescope.

WORSE THAN...



ROCK CLIMBING SHOES
FROM SPECIALIST SHOPS ● £100
Your GBA will be as safe as houses, protected from unexpected falls and secured tightly to pegs in the rock face. But for your own safety, invest in a good pair of shoes. And discard old ropes when they begin to look worn.

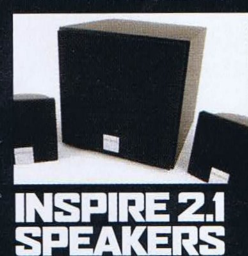
NGC ESSENTIALS



ACTION REPLAY
DATEL ● £30
Play all the import games you want, then hack them to pieces via a massive array of evil cheat codes. It's big and very, very clever.



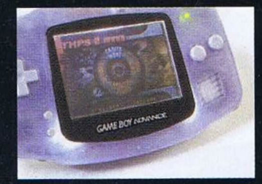
PRO PAD
LOGIC3 ● £14.99
Still the best third-party controller around – we'll be surprised if anyone beats it. It's sturdy, the analogue is almost perfect, and it's comfortable to hold. Lovely.



INSPIRE 2.1 SPEAKERS
CREATIVE LABS ● £35
After much deliberation, we figured that while they're not quite as good on the sound-quality front as Altec Lansing's speakers, at half the price, these offer better value.



WILLIAMS F1 RACING WHEEL
JOYTECH ● £44.99
Amazing. Not too pricey and leagues ahead of the competition. This little baby actually makes driving games even more fun than before. An essential purchase.



AFTER-BURNER
TRITON LABS ● £35
Most GBA lights don't require sawing, gluing and soldering to install, but once fitted there's no better lighting alternative to this.

TAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

Claim your share of the spoils!



As we prepare to move offices, to a slightly newer location a massive 200m down the road, we've unearthed a monstrous amount of tat that we simply can't shift/can no longer stand the sight of.

There's all sorts of stuff here, from steering wheels to LCD screens, old games to nearly-new T-shirts, and even more besides.

And it's yours if you want it. You can win choice items from this priceless pile of **NGC**-related ephemera by entering our Game On challenge contest (in this month's Game On book). Alternatively, you can claim your share of the booty by sending us your own unwanted possessions.

If you have something you think we might enjoy, and you don't mind the prospect of never seeing it again, stick it in a jiffy bag, along with your name and address, and we'll send you a random something of ours in return. Old tat for new! Who knows what you might get?

SEND YOUR JUNK TO
Tat's Entertainment
NGC Magazine
30 Monmouth Street
Bath
BA1 2BW

No organic items or anthrax powder please, folks.

POKEBALL
God knows how long this has been lying around. Geraint has been touching it, so it needs a wash. Inside is a Poliwag.

TFT SCREENS
Want to play your Gamecube on the move? Get a life! Alternatively, use one of our trio of backlit mobile monitors. Rubbish!

THE SHIRT OFF PAUL'S BACK
Paul's fragrant Mortal Kombat tee, among other items of haute couture.

Master the game, snag yourself some serious home entertainment









WIN! £3000 OF WIDESCREEN, SURROUND SOUND HEAVEN!





Ah, *Ikaruga* – the best shoot-'em-up on Gamecube, and possibly the most difficult thing ever created. There's nothing that proves your hardcore gaming skills quite like racking up a monster *'Ruga* score, and there's nothing like Atari/Treasure's modern masterpiece for reducing grown men to tears.

So just how much of an *Ikaruga* warrior are you? Have you mastered the chain combos? Have you made it past the first level yet? If you think you're up to the challenge, we've got some suitably hefty prizes to chuck in the direction of Britain's best *Ikaruga* players.

There's a top-of-the-range 32-inch widescreen telly, plus a Dolby Pro Logic II surround sound system, worth a combined £2000, for our *Ikaruga* champion, and standalone DPLII systems compatible with Gamecube (worth a tidy £500 each) for the two runners-up. Now those are prizes worth fighting for.

And all you have to do to win is **get the highest score on level one of *Ikaruga*.** Now, this isn't a case of just snapping a solitary, shadowy photograph of your high-score table. No way. We want to see a one-off performance recorded on video or DVD, from the start of the level right through to the summary screen at the end.

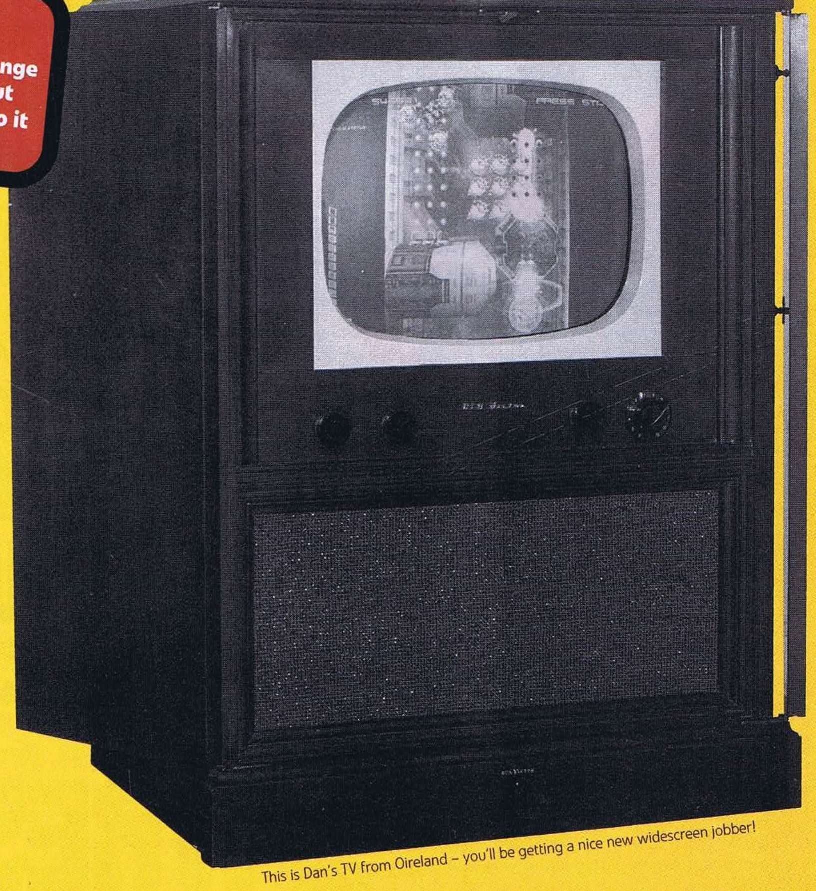
Turn to page 102 for tips on how to record your Gamecube's video output, and send the results to us at the address below. The deadline is 8th July, so you've got plenty of time to practice. The winners will be announced in issue 84…

TOP TIP

You can attempt this challenge on any difficulty level, but you'll score higher if you do it on the hardest setting.






This is Dan's TV from Oireland – you'll be getting a nice new widescreen jobber!

SEND YOUR ENTRIES TO…

Just call me The Daddy
NGC Magazine
30 Monmouth Street
Bath
BA1 2BW

Make sure your score is clearly visible, and don't forget to include your name and address.

THE LAW

1. Video evidence only. Any entries we suspect have been tampered with or altered in any way will be discarded. That means no Action Replay, folks.
2. In the event of a tie, the entry with the highest chain combo will win. If there's still a tie, we'll pick the winner at random.
3. This competition is open to UK residents only.
4. No cash prize alternative.
5. Only three things are certain in this world – death, taxes, and the finality of the editor's decision.

FREE TIPS BOOK!

MORE NEW CHEATS THAN EVER!

PLUS! EXCLUSIVE BLACK AND BRUISED BATTLE CARDS





EXPERT TIPS, JAPANESE LEARNS, TRIVIA AND MORE

EXTENDED PLAY



ZELDA: THE WIND WALKTHROUGH



TEMPLE TROUBLE? NO PROBLEM!

Dungeons demolished, oceans explored, bewilderfication banished! It's all here… P86

I'M THE BEST

Reckon you're simply the best? Better than all the rest? There's only one way to prove it. P102

MAILBOX

It's your letters,as Reef once so tiresomely sang. Only your letters are good. Most of the time. P108

PLUS!

COMPENDIUM

Engrish explained, enlightenment enhanced, and the evolution of movie adaptations endured. P112

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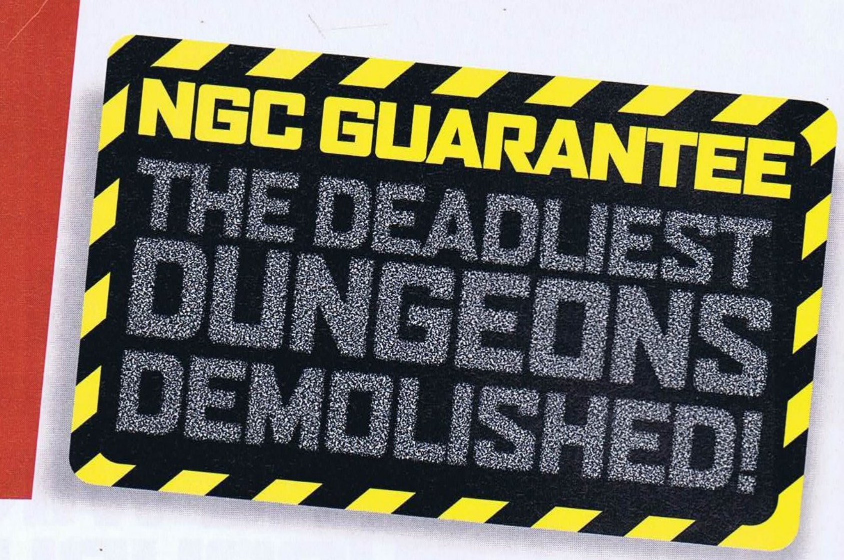






DEFEAT THE DUNGEONS IN...

ZELDA THE WIND WAKER



WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

The latest in the *Zelda* saga in the form of a brilliantly polished interactive cartoon. Set 100 years after *Ocarina of Time, The Wind Waker* sees Rinkydink – well, a small elf-boy impostor in a green costume who looks a bit like The Dink – setting sail on the old briny after his little sister gets kidnapped by a giant bird. You'll never guess who's responsible... Anyway, there's no denying it's one of the best-looking games Nintendo have made, and we're quite happy to let two or three gameplay niggles (such as, say, the interminable sailing sections) go for the sake of such a work of art. It's just... so... beautiful (sniff). Aaaaaaaaahhhhhhh...

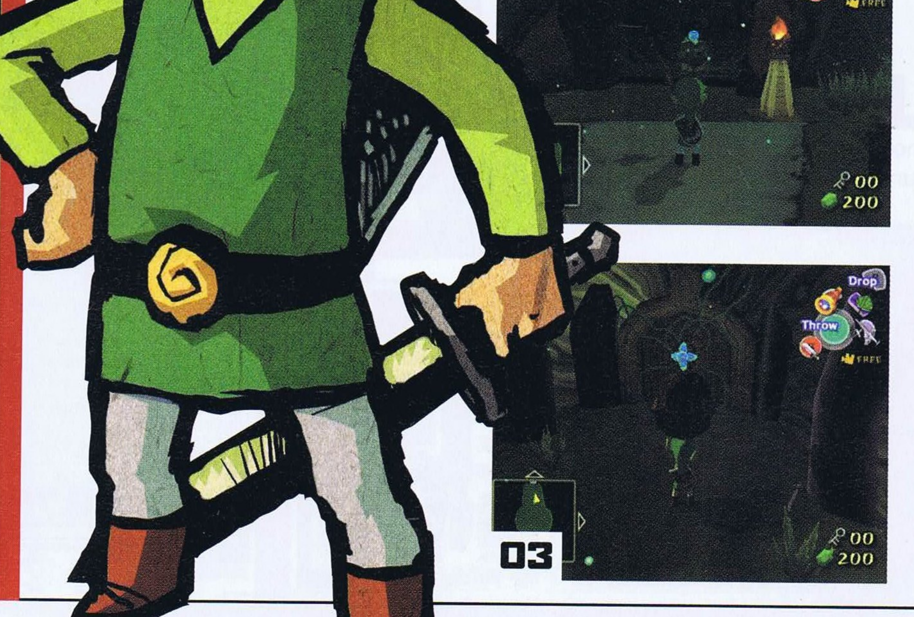


DUNGEONS MASTERED

Since it would take forever to describe the whole game in intricate detail, we've dissected, and chewed up the most difficult parts of *The Wind Waker* – namely, the second to fifth dungeons – and spat out a gigantic, phlegmy wad of semi-digested tips goodness onto these very pages for you. Have fun...



01





WHAT WE SAID IN THIS ISSUE!

"Forty unforgettable, spectacular hours in one of the richest, most beautiful gaming worlds ever created. If familiarity doesn't spoil the newness for you, it's going to be the best thing you've played in years."



97

FOREST HAVEN

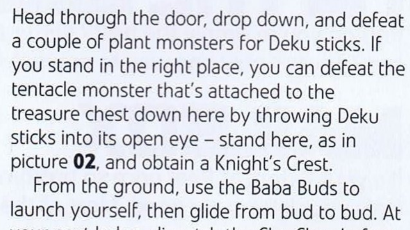
Once you're inside, head up the right-hand path, and through some Green Chu Chus, to get the Dungeon Map. The one door in here is blocked by some kind of tentacled monster. To defeat it, cut down the walnut-looking bush along the left side of the cavern **(01)**, pick it up, and toss it at the creature's eye.

02

03

Head through the door, drop down, and defeat a couple of plant monsters for Deku sticks. If you stand in the right place, you can defeat the tentacle monster that's attached to the treasure chest down here by throwing Deku sticks into its open eye – stand here, as in picture **02**, and obtain a Knight's Crest.

From the ground, use the Baba Buds to launch yourself, then glide from bud to bud. At your next ledge, dispatch the Chu Chus before using a Bomb Flower to dispatch the next door's guardian. (From here, you can use the nearest Baba Bud as a starting point to get to a higher ledge all the way across the cavern, where you'll find a treasure chest you can't open yet, which contains a Treasure Chart. From there, you can work your way back around to some hidden rupees, and an adjacent ledge containing a flytrap, a Chu Chu, and an urn containing a Joy Pendant.)



VEGETABLE STEW

Moving on, the next room contains some fluttering bulbs and a couple of plant monsters. To deal with the former, dizzy them with a blast of wind, then slash them while they're dazed; you may earn a Golden Feather. Kill the rearmost plant to reveal a Baba Bud; use it, and its brethren higher up, to ascend to the next door... which turns out to be blocked.



Hit the nearest windmill with a wave of the leaf to bring a tram over to you. You may use it, and further judicious applications of wind power, to ferry yourself across the room, where a walnut is boarded off. Break through the boards, pick up the walnut, use R to drop it


04



05

on the platform, and ferry yourself back across to destroy the door guardian.

Some spiked tentacles guard another precious walnut in the next chamber, but use the Deku Leaf to blow the walnut free of its confines. Now, destroy yet another tentacle beast with nutty goodness **(03)**, and go through its door.

Make your way around the path to your right, and use your Grappling Hook to reach the next ledge. Once there, hop carefully across the mobile platforms, uproot the walnut near the locked door, and, with it in hand, hop from its perch to the central, hollow stump. From here, it's but another leap to another tentacled-shut door, and its liberation via ballistic proteins.

SPIKED LINK

The next hall is full of little black spiky critters, who live to attach themselves to Link and thereby screw up any important jumps he may have to make in the near future. Their chasm holds a Yellow Rupee. Make your way through them to the door at the end of the hall, where a maze awaits.

Countless tentacles also await you just underneath the surface of this room, and will burst through the floor when you get close. Walk, don't run, and you'll be fine. To the left, when you enter, you'll be able to wend your way through the tentacles to find a Bomb Flower and a securely boarded entrance. Use the flower to blow open said entrance to find this dungeon's Compass, then toss a second flower over the tentacles between you and the nearby ledge. You'll blow open a second gate, inside which you'll find a Small Key. Investigate the urns on high ledges in this room to find a Joy Pendant; if you have the patience, feel free to exit and re-enter this room, which will cause the urn with the pendant in it to regenerate, so you may claim as many as you like.

With key in hand, go back through the hallway to the large round room, and unlock the door near the walnut. Through it is another wind-powered lift, though you'll have to destroy a couple more of the propeller-driven bulbs before you can travel without irritation.

The next door shall bring you to a larger room with two layers of canopy above your head. What with black bulbs, plant monsters, and a new breed of large black beetle (strike at its eye), this area can be deadly if you're not cautious. Use Baba Buds to climb up. There's only one door at the top of this room that can be opened at the present time; do so.

BOSS Green Butterfly (04)

It's not much to speak of. The butterfly is essentially a black beetle with wings; it likes to occupy your attention by firing gouts of little spiky creatures at you, then follow up with a jet-powered dive. Counter the dive with a few good sword swings – the charged roundhouse swing (hold down B) works well here – or dodge it and hit it while recovering. Once you've hacked off its wings, a few more shots will settle its hash for good.

Defeating the butterfly opens the wooden gate opposite the one you entered through, letting you claim the invaluable Boomerang. You'll find the Boomerang to be a useful tool. Not only will it enable you to hit distant targets – such as the two tentacle monsters guarding the door you passed on the way in here – but it can sever tentacles (which will prove handy in a moment), instantly dispatch plant monsters, and even slice the propellers right off black bulbs.

REPLACEMENT BULBS

Use the Boomerang to hit the two crystal switches above your entrance door **(05)**, thus enabling you to leave. Once back in the canopy room, dispatch the regenerated bulbs and the monsters guarding the opposite doorway, then open the next door. Clear out the dangling bulbs with the Boomerang, so you can glide to the ledge across the room and its treasure chest (a Joy Pendant).

The next door brings you back out to the old, familiar round room that serves to link up much of this dungeon. It's time to do some creative remodelling.

Lock on to all five blue cords that hold the large hollow stump aloft, and sever them all at once with the Boomerang. This will drop the stump through the floor at the bottom of this area, which in turn will enable you to access a hitherto unexplored part of the basement. Fearlessly jump down after it, trusting to the stagnant pool of foetid water it landed in to break your fall, and exit via the handy door.

Utilise your Boomerang and sword to dispatch all opposition, and take the right-hand path. This will take you to a large, open area where you'll find another flower held aloft by vines attached to the ceiling **(06)**; once again, sever them all at once to drop the blossom into the water. (If you want the treasure chest across the room, use the blossom as a stepping stone first. It contains a Yellow Rupee.)



06



07

Once at ground level, use the blossom as a stepping stone so you can pitch a Bomb Flower at the fenced-off door. Enter.

This area consists of a hollow stump with a chest inside, secured by a locked gate and guarded by plant monsters and propeller bulbs. Destroy all the plants to reveal a Baba Bud, then hop up to the highest ledge. You can bring the platform to you by activating the nearest windmill, but you'll have to propel yourself back along the tram cord with the Deku Leaf. You'll find a Bomb Flower. Toss it into the hole on the roof of the hollow stump to destroy the tentacle monster inside, thus securing another Treasure Chart.

Return to the waterway and climb onto the blossom. Use your Deku Leaf to propel your impromptu raft along the waterway and around the corner.

From the top of the hollow tree, lock on to each white crystal with your Boomerang. A well-placed toss should hit all five of them, and open the wooden gate. Claim the Big Key, attempt to leave...

BOSS Big Moblin Duo (07)

...and meet your hosts.

You have a lot more room to duck and weave here than you did atop Dragon Roost. Get some distance, stun them both with the Boomerang, and lay into them while they're dazed.

The defeat of the Moblins, besides being worth a pair of Skull Necklaces, opens another gate overhead. Use your Grappling Hook to access it. You'll find yourself overlooking the forked path from earlier.

Retrace your steps to the large white blossom that you saw fit to drop through the floor, and activate the nearby windmill with the Deku Leaf. You may use the resulting updraft, in conjunction with the Deku Leaf and a handy Baba Bud **(08)**, to travel back up a floor. Smash open one final door with the Boomerang.



08

Defeat a pair of beetles for a Joy Pendant. The boss awaits, but you may wish to smash some of these dry honeycombs open first; several contain rupees, while one holds a fairy hostage.

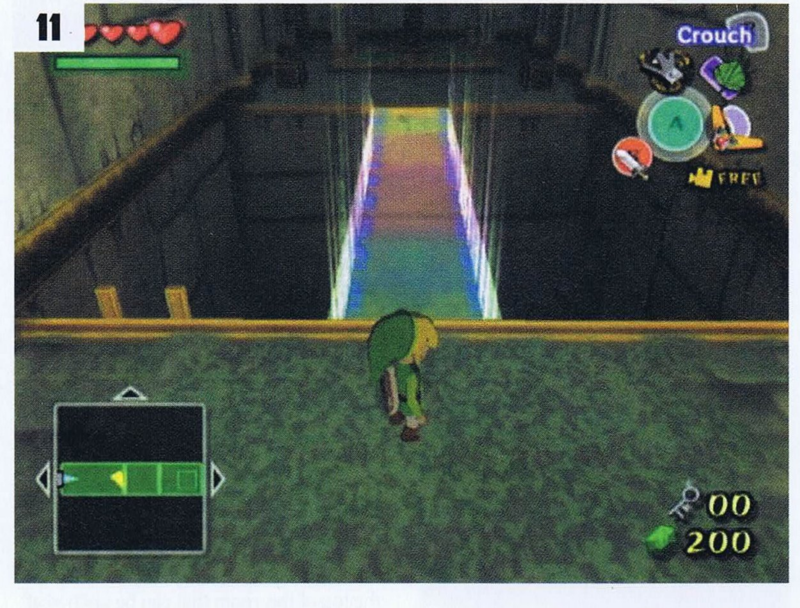
BOSS Plant Monster (09)

This will take a bit of time and care. Use your Boomerang to sever the cords that attach the creature to the ceiling, while dodging its mostly inaccurate tentacle swipes. Don't stay in one place. When it falls to the ground, run forward and slash at its exposed head, though if you're still inside it when it closes again, it'll cost you a Heart. Three or four good ground combos should slay the monster, freeing its captive and earning you another Heart Container.

Teleport back to the Deku Tree, and it'll give you Farore's Pearl. On your way back to your boat, be sure to check the mailbox for a Piece of Heart, courtesy of Kamoli's father.


09





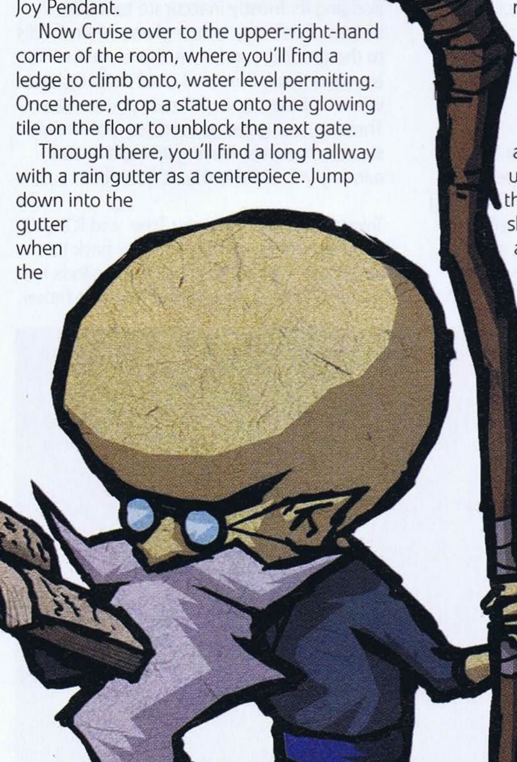
TOWER OF THE GODS

Using the maddeningly slow Cruise option (hold R) **(10)**, enter the cavern ahead.

In the lower right-hand corner of the room, as per your map, you'll find a room with three crates on the floor, and several crumbly-looking walls. Move the crates around (Grab them with R, then shove or pull as required) so you can use them to reach the crumbly parts, then bomb them. You'll find the Dungeon Map and a Joy Pendant.

Now Cruise over to the upper-right-hand corner of the room, where you'll find a ledge to climb onto, water level permitting. Once there, drop a statue onto the glowing tile on the floor to unblock the next gate.

Through there, you'll find a long hallway with a rain gutter as a centrepiece. Jump down into the gutter when the water level recedes, grab a box, and drop it onto the glowing floor tile. This will create a light bridge **(11)**, but it'll only exist while the gutter's empty. Climb back out of the water, wait for the water to recede, and run across the bridge to the other side of the gutter, where a statue awaits.



Pick it up, run back across the bridge, and put the statue into the centre of the gazebo outside. This raises the next gate.

At the end of the hallway beyond said gate, drop a couple of statues on a couple more tiles to release another lock. This room's a little trickier; get down into the lowered section of the room, and use the R-button to grab and shove the large crates into a straight line, so you'll be able to hop across them to the unlit torches on the far side of the room. Once you've done so, shatter one of the urns and grab a Deku stick. Light its end, hop across the crates, and light the torches on the other side of the room. You'll receive a Small Key.

DAMBUSTERS

Back outside, bomb the west wall of the waterfall room with the boat's cannon, to find a hidden passage. You can unlock the lower of the two doors here with your new Small Key, where you'll find a number of electrified Chu Chus. Smite them all – stun with the Boomerang, stab with the sword – and a staircase of light will rise from the centre of the room **(12)**, allowing you to abscond with another statue.

Plug the statue into the gazebo at the top of the nearby stairs, as before, to redirect the waterfall and reveal a new exit. Before you do that, however, turn around and go through the door across from the gazebo. You'll encounter a new type of enemy, a flaming skull (you can blow them out momentarily with the Deku Leaf), and find the Compass. (Come back to this room later with your bow, and shoot the eye on the wall to get a Treasure Chart.)

Go check out the area behind the waterfall. Here, you'll need to ferry a couple of statues across an area guarded by a laser sentry. Wait until the glowing orb above the statue has rotated to one side, then make a mad dash past the other. Place both statues on the glowing tiles, then step on the third, to activate an elevator.

Ride up to the next door. This area features blocked doors on two sides and a fourth marked with a glowing red seal; we'll call this the temple room. Exit via the latter and ride the elevator across the gap.

STONY AND THE BRIDGE

Run across the light bridge and check the black plinth on the floor. You'll meet a creepy new friend, who we'll call Stony the Statue. Stony will follow you unless you leap across a gap or pick him up.

Using the narrow path underneath the light bridge, walk back to the entry door, then pick Stony up. Hop across the gap, go through the door, then with Stony still in hand, use the elevator to get back to the temple room. Stony will reveal a new monolith **(13)**. Check it to learn the Command Melody.

You've opened the next door. Head through it and use the Grappling Hook to swing across the gap, but carefully; if the flaming skulls prove to be a problem, put 'em out with a blast from the Deku Leaf. Open the door across the gap, and, inside, swing across the gap.

Press R to coax Stony's cousin Rocky down. Step on the nearby floor tile, then use the Command Melody to take control of Rocky. Bounce him across the light bridge, then change back to Link and follow Rocky using the Grappling Hook. Pick him up and open the door again, then use him to activate the glowing floor tile.

Glide to the freshly opened door at the side of the gap. Inside, there's a special friend waiting for you…

BOSS Knight (14)

The knight is, at least at the beginning of your bout, immune to frontal attacks. Circle and use the counter-attack move to knock off his breastplate. Now you can punish him with ground combos, knocking away his shield and sword until he's near helpless.

Beating the knight is worth another Knight's Crest and the Hero's Bow **(15)**.

Outside the knight's chamber, hit the eye on the wall with an arrow. This will activate a pair of elevators. Swing back across to where you left Rocky, then pick him up and use the elevators to ferry him back to the temple room.

Rocky's arrival unlocks the last barred door. Head through it and dispatch a couple of pesky bats with your Boomerang. Jump down onto one of the platforms suspended by chains, and to the adjacent door.

Welcome to the wonderful world of elevators. You'll want your Deku Leaf in hand in case you fall, or to put out any skulls that get too close. Use the elevators to ascend to the top of the room, with your bow in hand to activate eye-shaped buttons **(16)**. This will eventually bring you to a chest that contains a Small Key; you can also hit a third eye switch, above the door you came in through **(17)**, to reveal a chest that contains a Joy Pendant.





Four out of five dungeons... beated!

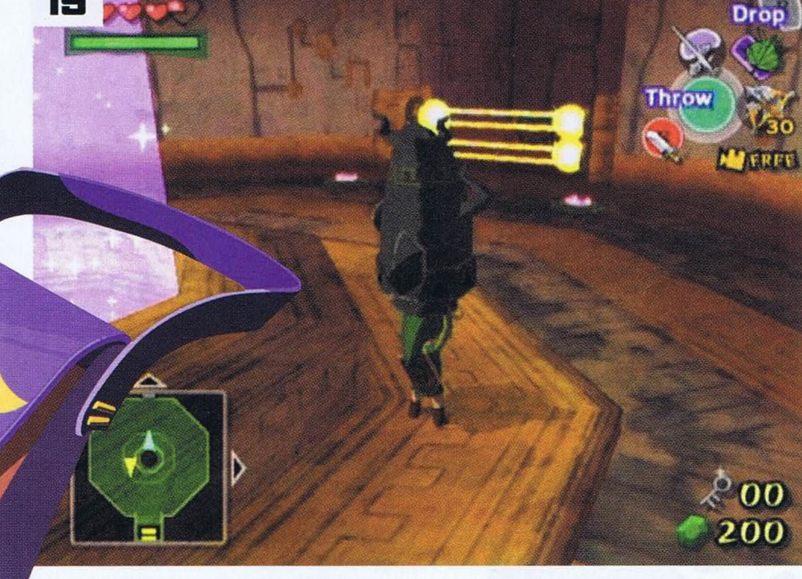
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Return to the previous room. Climb the ladder back up to the door you first entered through, and use a couple of the statues here as counterweights **(18)**. Put them onto one of the platforms, and the other won't lower when you hop on. In so doing, you'll be able to jump the gap and get to the locked door on the other side.

Another statue – let's call this one Mike – is waiting for you on the other side of a *laser fence*. (The medieval veneer of this game is starting to crack.) Climb the tall block in the centre of the room, leap off, and use the Deku Leaf to glide over the lasers. Call Mike down, then use the Command Melody and run him through the lasers to the glowing floor tile that deactivates them.

Back by the chain platforms, a new fireball-chucking enemy, a wizard, has arrived. Deal with him first, via time-honoured anti-teleporter tactics, then counterweight one of the platforms and hop across them with Mike in hand.

Mike's placement will activate a teleporter at the centre of the temple room. Enter it, and you'll be transported to the third floor of the temple. Once again, carry a couple of statues across the room to two of the three glowing floor tiles **(19)**, and stand on the third to drop the laser fence. The chest behind it holds this dungeon's Big Key. Taking it causes the statues to animate. Destroy them both by hitting their eyes with arrows, then slashing the glowing jewel on their backs while they're stunned **(20)**, and the gate blocking the northern door will rise.

The stairs to the boss are guarded by several laser sentries and a couple of birds. The rotating orbs can be dealt with by simply rolling past as fast as you can, whereas the fixed orbs must be shattered with an arrow while they're firing. At the end of the stairs, you'll find the boss' door; one of the jars contains a fairy.



BOSS Giant Head, Hands (21, 22, 23)

The toughest fight so far – not that that's saying a hell of a lot. This will test your aim with the bow as well as your patience.

When the fight begins, the hands do the bulk of the fighting, attempting to crush you from above as well as sweep you into the room's electrified gutter. Don't let them do the latter; you'll take at least three-quarters of a heart's worth of damage before you're able to climb out.

Get out your bow, and between the hands' attacks, tag their eyes with two arrows each. This'll stun them and make them go limp, but an arrow hit only 'counts' if the eye's pupil was visible. If you can stun them both at the same time, the head will come into play.

The head attacks with a gout of flame from its mouth, which can be avoided via cautiously using the A-button somersault as a dodge roll. If it connects, it'll do damage by itself, and will probably knock you into the 'gutter'. After its flames die down, target its open red eyes with arrows and fire. When it's stunned, its mouth will open; this is your cue to pitch a bomb in there.

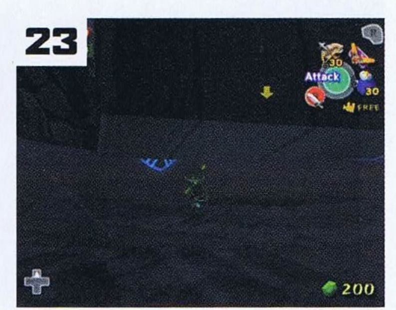
If you run out of arrows, wait a few seconds, and the statue head will drop a bundle onto the battlefield.

Victory will net you a Heart Container, as is de rigeur, and teleport you to the bell tower. At the top of the tower, grab the ringer with your Grappling Hook.

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EARTH TEMPLE

Use the Ballad of Gales to teleport to Mother and Child Island, in the northwest corner of the map. You'll encounter the 'queen of all fairies,' who'll give you the ability to use fire and ice arrows.

From there, head to Fire Mountain, one square south of Dragon Roost Mountain; it's the volcano, not the large cylindrical mountain visible from nearby. From your boat, shoot an ice arrow into the plume of fire atop the volcano, which will clear the way. You now have five minutes to climb to the mountain's summit, drop in, jump across the platforms in the lava, kill both centipedes, and acquire the Power Bracelets **(24)**. Lift the massive statue head to clear your escape route.

Thus equipped, head to the southern marked destination on your Sea Chart, one square east of Outset. Pick up the statue head on the beach and walk on in.

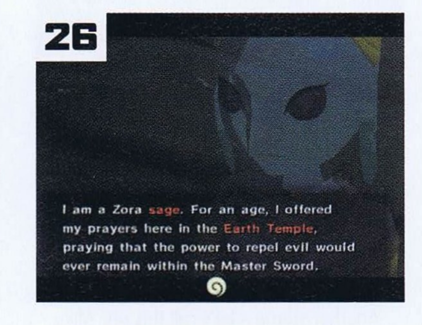
Inside, check the plinth and play its tune to learn the Earth God's Lyric **(25)**. You'll make the acquaintance of Laruto **(26)**, whose nose should give you all the clues you need to find his successor. Go back to Dragon Roost Mountain. Medli's on the second-floor balcony; you'll need a favourable wind and the Deku Leaf to reach her **(27, 28)**. Play her the Earth God's Lyric.

UNCHAINED MEDLI

With Medli in tow, return to the Earth Temple and play the Earth God's Lyric in front of the plinth from which you learned it. You'll enter the Temple. Remember, while you're in here, pressing R will call Medli, and you can take control of her with the Command Melody **(29)**.

You can also pick her up and jump for an effect not unlike gliding. Do so in the first room to reach the exit door, then pick her up again once you land. Unless you're carrying Medli, she won't come through doors with you.

Send Link out ahead to kill off a trio of large Moblins, then pick Medli up and go to the top of the stairs. Jump off the top of the stairs with her in hand, and she can fly you to one of the switches atop an adjacent pedestal. Move Link onto the switch, then use the Command Melody and fly Medli over to its twin on the other side of the room. Presto: door's open. Exit.



The next room's a popular Chu Chu hangout. Deal with most of them in your accustomed fashion, then lure the annoying purple ones into the ray of sunlight to turn them to stone **(30)**. After that, a whack with the Skull Hammer will destroy them. Medli, if you take control of her, can reflect the sunlight with the surface of her harp. Press A to fine-tune it, and shine it onto the 'cloaked' treasure chest to get the Dungeon Map **(31)**.

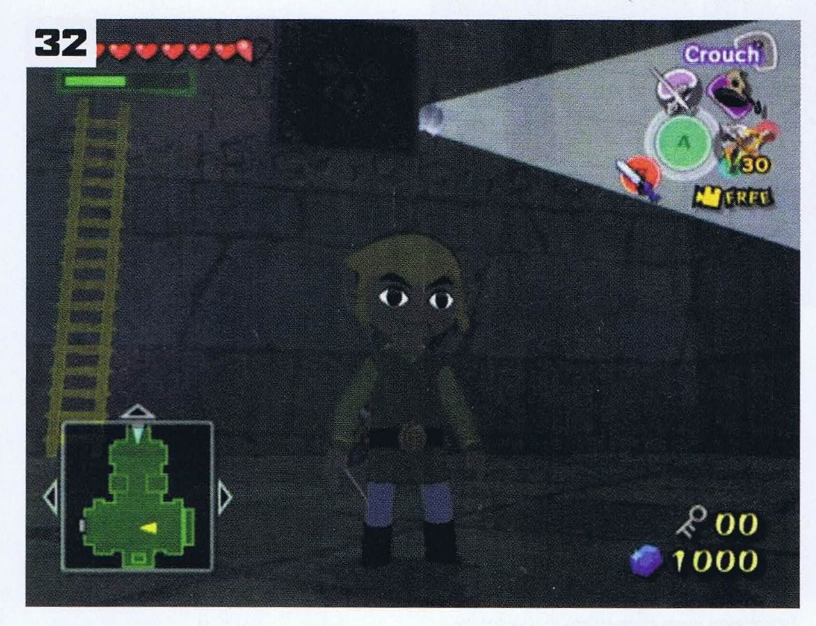
















The next room holds two rays of sunlight and a large objet d'art that you must completely ignore for now. Instead, use a ray of reflected sunlight to reveal the switch concealed by the purple smoke, and send Link down to hammer it. Once you're through the door you just unlocked, smash a couple of flaming skulls, then climb a handy ladder and pull the large granite block there to bring in some more sunlight **(32)**. As Medli, reflect the sunlight to reveal the cloaked chest (a Small Key).

Unlock the door in the smoke-filled room with your new Key. One of the tapestries on the wall has sunlight shining through it. Tag the tapestry with a fire arrow to burn it away. Now, dispatch all non-purple Chu Chus via crowd-pleasing violence, and lure the others into the sunlight. When they petrify, pick them up and use them to trigger the two switches, to create a staircase nearby. Run up it and push the block off the edge to open the next gate.



DARKNESS AT NOON

The next room is guarded by a black pool of darkness; step into it, or get grabbed by the arm that emerges from it, and you'll be taken back to the smoke-filled room. Wait for the arm to appear, and hit it with your sword or fire arrows to destroy it. (If Medli gets captured, she'll wind up in a cell suspended above the entry door to the smoke-filled room; just take control of her and fly her out.)

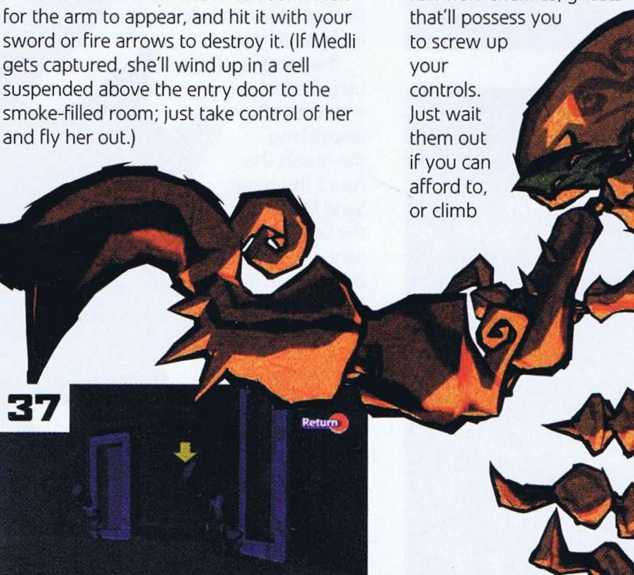
Now, push the closest granite block against the wall to let some sun in **(33)**, then stand Medli in the sun and reflect sunlight against the statue atop the nearby block, as well as the labelled walls on either side of her **(34, 35)**. Push the remaining blocks to the other end of the grooves they're in. You'll open a gate and reveal a chest that contains the Compass.

Pick Medli up and fly across the room **(36)**. Leave Medli behind, climb up, and venture forth alone. The next door leads to a donnybrook with two big Moblins and a few new enemies, ghosts that'll possess you to screw up your controls. Just wait them out if you can afford to, or climb up the nearby ladder into the sunlight to dispel them. Destroying all enemies in here will reveal stairs going up, leading to the only unlocked door.

Drop down into the crypt to fight a trio of zombies **(37)**. The Small Key you need is in one of the sarcophagi, and victory here will lower an escape ladder. Backtrack and unlock the door.









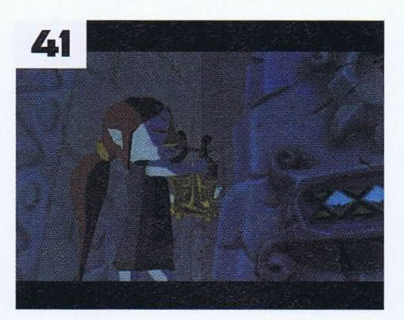

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BOSS Skeleton Warriors (38)
You can attack the skeletons all day, but it won't do you any good unless you smash their skulls. They're also very dangerous; one good swing from them can cost you a heart. Instead, if you have bombs, use them to scatter the warriors' bones, then hit their skulls as they ineffectually hop around. Victory will allow you to reach the Mirror Shield **(39)** in the middle sarcophagus.

Draw your sword and hold down R. While doing so, you may aim reflected sunlight at the sun glyph above the door.

Backtrack to the smoke-filled room, stopping en route to collect Medli. Use both characters to reflect sunlight onto the giant gadget until it takes on the appearance of a smiling, yet terrifying, sun **(40)**. This will reveal stairs. Onwards.

When you reach the rope bridge, use the Deku Leaf to temporarily extinguish the smoking skulls, then hit them while they're dormant. A quick duet on the Earth God's Lyric **(41)** shall yield another door.

Leave Medli behind as you dispatch a pair of zombies (sunlight stuns them), then bounce sunlight off this room's handy mirrors to vaporise a trio of luckless statues. So doing shall reveal yet more doors. Take the one on your left.

Try to kill off the pools of darkness in this smoke-filled hallway before you enter – fire arrows work best. Then cross the hall, push the mirrored statue onto the floor tile, and hammer down the nearby switch to bounce some sunlight off it.

MIRROR MIRROR

Return to the mirrored room, and take the opposite door. This is a simple, yet frustrating area; dash through the smoke, with your weapons disabled, dodging pools of darkness that you cannot really see, to obtain a Small Key from a treasure chest. Thankfully, opening that chest clears the smoke. If you like, you can destroy all three pools of darkness to reveal a Treasure Chart.

Now, with Medli, use the wrecked pillar to give yourself the boost you need to reach the top of the granite block, like so. From the block, you can reach the locked door. Use the Command Melody to bring Medli with you.

The mirror you set up provides a method of dispatching the ghosts that haunt this room. Send Medli into the beam of light, once all the enemies are (re-)dead, and reflect it slightly to her right. Link can use his Mirror Shield to bounce sunlight into the statue against the far wall **(42)**, revealing a new door.

The subsequent catacombs are full of ill-maintained sarcophagi, the lids of which will fall down as you walk by, so be careful. The place is full of bats, and two of the sarcophagi play host to zombies; the third, a skeleton warrior. Destroy them all, then walk Medli to the plinth around the corner for another rousing rendition of the Earth God's Lyric **(43, 44)**. Go down the stairs to the left and carefully jump down with both characters; the bottom of the pit is inhabited mostly by darkness, and can mess up your entire day. Use the door at the bottom of the stairs.

Here's where things get a little tricky…

- Jump down and push the two nearest mirror statues to the ends of their grooves.

- Send Medli to the top of the domed building, where she can push a switch and let in the daylight.



43


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45







■ Switch back to Link, get on top of the right-hand dais (as viewed from the ledge), and reflect sunlight onto both the nearest treasure chest **(45)** and one of those nifty evaporating statues. This will reveal…

■…a mirror statue. Pull it out of its enclosure and push it to the end of its rut, then go stand on the dais inside the alcove on the right side of the room.

■ Reactivate Medli, and bring her down to the dais where Link stood to reveal the treasure chest. Reflect sunlight off of her harp directly onto Link.

■ As Link, shine sunlight on the wall right in front of you to reveal another mirror statue. Manipulate it to the end of its rut. This will create a circuit that will beam sunlight throughout the room, but we're not quite done yet.

■ Go and stand on the dais at the end of the circuit. From here, you can open a secret door that leads to three crypts; shine sunlight on them to reveal three skeleton warriors, the deaths of which occasion the appearance of a Treasure Chart. (You may want to save this until last, as leaving the mirror room will reset the positions of not only Medli, but a few of the statues.)

■ Meanwhile, back at the mirror room, that same dais can be used to open the second cloaked treasure chest, or destroy another statue to reveal another mirror. Drag it out, as before.

■ Bring Medli back down to stand on the dais in your stead. There's a shorter platform right next to it; have her reflect sunlight in its general direction.

■ Switch back to Link, stand on that dais, and use Medli's beam to destroy the wall **(46)**. Pull out yet another mirror statue.





■ Now, for the final step, send Medli over to stand on one of the dais with a snake overlooking it. Shine some sunlight on the face of the 'sun', as you did before in the smoke-filled room on 1F.

■ Switch to Link and repeat the process.

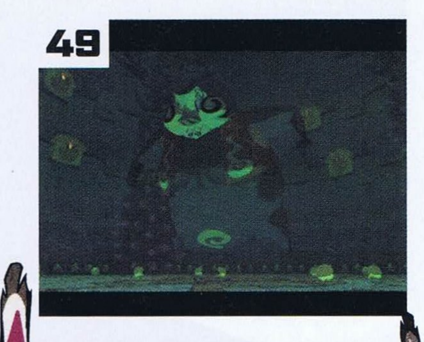
The newly revealed door leads to a cell block patrolled by a knight and two smoking skulls. Dispatch them for – at last! – the Big Key. To get back to the Big Door, return to the ledge below it. You may climb up the vines on the wall here to reach the next-highest ledge **(47)**, and Medli can fly up after you. Use her to reach the Big Door **(48)**, open it, and get ready for another…

BOSS Giant Ghost (49)

D'you think this guy and King Boo hang out? Reflect sunlight onto the ghost from one of the few patches that hop around the battlefield, and he'll become solid and immobile. This is your chance to throw him like a bowling ball at one of the giant spiked columns. So doing explodes the giant ghost into his constituent parts real good. Destroy all the smaller spectres with your sword, and it's a done deal.

Beware, however. Touching the giant ghost will screw up your controls, and it uses both wind and fire breath to try to knock you into the walls.

Victory, of course, will reward you with a Heart Container.



WIND TEMPLE

When you feed Gale Isle's fish, he'll suggest that you head to Ice Ring Isle. Upon your arrival, shoot a fire arrow into the blue cloud atop the island to start your five-minute countdown. Get on shore and make your way further in, then make your cautious way along the one path open to you, into the dragon's mouth.

The inside of said mouth isn't as big as it looks; two ice slides later, you'll be in position to claim your new Iron Boots.

Sporting your new stylish footwear, you can climb the beachfront at Gale Isle and smash the offending statue with your Skull Hammer. Entry achieved. Once inside, check the plinth and wave the stick to learn the Wind God's Aria.

Once again, you've got a quest to undertake, and you only know one fiddle player. It's time to go back to Forest Haven and grab Makar.

When you arrive, you'll see musical notes coming from a waterfall near the dock. Grapple onto the branch over your head and swing on in. When you talk to Makar, play him the Wind God's Aria **(50).**

Return to Gale Isle. Just as with Medli, play the Wind God's Aria with Makar in the room to break the plinth **(51)**, and gain access to the temple proper.

Pick Makar up and go through the first door, then take control of him with the Command Melody. Makar can fly, and plant trees on patches of earth **(52)**. Doing so here will net you an Orange Rupee.

Fly Makar up to the next ledge, over the wind, and drop him onto the switch **(53)**. As Link, climb onto the higher of the two spring-loaded platforms, put on your Iron Boots, and take them off again. You'll go flying. At the apex of your jump, trigger the Deku Leaf to glide to Makar's location. Grab him and go.

Dispatch a pair of statues, then hit the windmill in the centre of the room with a gust of wind to raise the back wall. With Makar in hand, run past the sliding blade trap, then plant a couple of trees to raise the gate **(54)**.

MEET YOUR MAKAR

Take control of Makar again the moment you reach the next room. Fly him up to a series of ledges, planting a tree each time, to raise the next two gates… and get him captured. He's gone for now. Use the one door you can reach.

Dispatch a couple of bulbs with your Boomerang and sword. Makar's in the next room, but he's imprisoned at the moment, owing to a heavy statue; so much for the Power Bracelets, huh? Keep moving for now; the statues that guard the next door can be killed with an arrow to the eye, then a bomb in the mouth.

Past that, bash through a weak spot in the floor with your Iron Boots, slay a pool of darkness, and activate the nearby windmill. When you jump back up with the spring-loaded platform, you'll find what was once a wall is now the floor. Take a Joy Pendant from an alcove, then use the door past the plinth.

Through here, use your Deku Leaf and the handy updraft to reach the switch atop a high ledge **(55)**, which will lower part of the chain-link fence ahead. Glide over to it and go through, but watch your back; another wizard is standing guard. Fire arrows are his just reward.

From this collection of ledges, glide around. One gate leads to the Dungeon Map, while another takes you to an open



















chain-link fence, strewn with skulls. Another wizard will lay down a barrage of fireballs as you draw close, backed up by some of those bulbs we learned to love all the way back at the Forest Haven.

The next door leads straight to a floor switch overlooking Makar's prison. Pound it down with the Iron Boots, then dive down the resulting hole in the floor, using the Deku Leaf to break your fall. There are two doors at the bottom, one of which is locked. Use the other.

The point of this room is to smash through all five fragile floor tiles, thus causing a new treasure chest to materialise. Do so; you'll need to move the spring-loaded crate across the floor below so you can get back out, as well the plain crate next to it so you can get onto the springs **(56)**. Then, when the new treasure chest materialises (a Small Key, joining the existing Treasure Chart), you'll need to move it back so you can get to the chest. Doing so makes the spikes retract.

Go and unlock the door. Doing so will get you into a scrap with a particularly annoying teleporting wizard, who likes to summon Knights, Moblins, and Bulbs to back him up, but hit-and-run is the order of the day. Keep running around the edge of the room until you get a chance to stab or shoot at the wizard. When he's gone, wipe out his backup. Your reward will be a staple of the series, the Hookshot **(57)**.

Use it now, targeting the bullseye-esque item on the wall **(58)**, to carry yourself up to a switch. Hammer it to let yourself out.

PLAYING HOOKY

Use the Hookshot to climb back up the central shaft. When you can go no higher with it alone, glide across the shaft to a treasure chest with the Compass in it, then use a spring platform to continue your ascent. At the top, you should wind up back at Makar's cell; put on the Iron Boots, then Hookshot the forehead of the statue to free him **(59)**. His cellmate is a Joy Pendant.

(At your leisure, pull down all the statue heads on the walls with bullseyes on their foreheads, and destroy all the enemies. You'll reveal a Treasure Chart.)



60



61



Drop to the ledge just below Makar's prison, then move over a bit so you can Hookshot the closest available target. Have Makar fly after you, and revisit the room where Makar got captured.

The trees that Makar planted can be used as Hookshot targets. Do so with a quickness, before the resident wizard gets a chance to summon up too many monsters. Make him good and dead, then get Makar to fly up after Link and exit.

The following cliffs are guarded by smoking skulls, but the Hookshot helps to destroy them. Do so, so that Makar can remain unmolested while he plants Hookshot targets for Link, and exit. Beware of the pool of darkness on the tallest cliff.

The old two-characters-two-switches situation rears its ugly head in the next room. Now, the route to the boss is open, if not unlocked.

Send Makar to the bottom of the shaft. He can plant two trees down here, which will, by some photosynthetic miracle, activate the propeller. As Link, ride the resulting updraft to the highest room on the shaft. You'll get into a scrap with six – count 'em– hopping statues. Their defeat is worth a Small Key.

KNIGHT KNIGHT

From your lofty perch, descend via Deku Leaf to the eastern hall on the first floor of the dungeon; it may be easiest to enter freefall between updrafts, and then glide over to the entrance as you pass it. Dispatch both guardian statues – an arrow to the eye, a bomb down the throat – and then summon Makar to join you.

This door leads back to the plinth you had to ignore a long, long time ago. Play the Wind God's Aria **(60)**, then pick a fight with two white knights and one black knight. It's not going to be easy, but once you manage to knock one knight's breastplate off, keep circling around them; the other two will frequently hit their buddy by mistake. They're guarding the Big Key.

Jump headlong down the main shaft with Makar, and unlock the door under the propeller. It leads directly into a bastard of a fight with two skeleton warriors, a wizard, and a lot of those spiny black things; your best bet may be to Hookshot to a ledge early on, so you can shoot the wizard with relative impunity. When that's over with, there's a switch on a high ledge that wants to be stomped on; equipped with the Hookshot and Iron Boots, this should prove to be a simple matter.

The next walkway is a bit trickier. First, dispatch the guardian statues and Moblins that stand guard; if you should fall, climb back up using the vines near the door you entered by. With the enemies defeated, fly Makar over the wind tunnels for just long enough to plant a tree. Link can now Hookshot across the gap to slay the pool of darkness and Bulbs that haunt the opposite end of the room.

The next room is difficult. You must use one of the iron blocks to hold back two of the blade traps. First, trap the nearest one, which is easy enough **(61)**; second, put the Iron Boots on, then push the crate just far enough forward that it still pens in the first trap, but can also block the second **(62)**.

From there, it's easy. The gap in the floor makes it a bit trickier to pen in the third blade trap, but that's easily circumvented; just toss one crate into the gap so you can use it as a stepping stone **(63)**. With that done, put on the Iron Boots again, grab Makar, and go sing the Wind God's Aria to another plinth. It's yet again time for...

BOSS Antlion (64, 65)

Interesting choice of bosses for the Wind Temple...

It's not so much what the Antlion does, so much as how it does it. If you're too busy fighting its weak spawn (aim for the head), or trying to target its blue tongue with your Hookshot (bring it close, then give it a good slashing), it'll eat you and take away at least two Hearts. Keep an eye on the ground surrounding you; if it turns dark, start running in the other direction as fast as you possibly can.

After you hit its tongue, it'll probably dive under the surface, letting its spawn do the fighting for a while as it warms up for a massive, full-body suicide dive. Just don't stop moving, and it should miss.

You will, of course, receive a Heart Container – the last one in the game – for the Antlion's death... but more importantly, you'll restore the Master Sword to its full power! Job done.

63

62



64



65



TRIFORCE PIECES







After you clear out the Wind Temple, the King of Red Lions' next mission for you is to search for the eight pieces of the missing Triforce. The first problem you'll run into is that all eight pieces are, predictably, underwater – you'll need to find the charts that indicate their positions before you can find the pieces of Triforce **(01)**.

One helpful hint is that when the fish are talking about 'Triumph Forks,' they refer to the Triforce; the Nintendo translators are apparently making their own fun.

Once you've found one or more Triforce Charts, take them to Tingle on his eponymous island. He'll charge you truly extortionate sums of money to translate the charts, but afterwards, you can search for the Triforce as with the Treasure Charts.

The locations of the Charts are as follows:

1 Past the ships guarding the Islet of Steel, sail inside. Stand on the purple tile and play the Wind's Requiem.

2 Give the teacher on Windfall Island twenty Joy Pendants to receive the Cabaña Deed. You can now enter the cabin at the Private Oasis **(02)**. Inside, pull the lever on the ceiling with your Grappling Hook to put out the fire and reveal a crawlspace. Navigate the maze below to find another strangely-shaped floor tile. Stand on it, play the Requiem, and receive your prize.

3 Head to Bird's Peak Rock with a Hyoi Pear and your Bow ready. Take out all the larger birds who nest in the nearby peaks, then send a seagull up there to hit the five switches in the larger birds' nests. This raises the iron gate in the cliff nearby.

4 On Diamond Steppe Island, Hookshot up the cliffs until you find a hole in the ground. Drop in, and you'll find yourself in a ships' graveyard. From your starting point, jump into the first cauldron, then run around the corner, defeat a pool of darkness, and use the cauldron it was guarding. You'll wind up on a deck near a Joy Pendant; drop down and enter the closest cauldron to where you landed. Defeat another pool of darkness, and jump into the left-hand cauldron against the back wall of this deck. Claim the Ghost Ship Chart from a treasure chest, then run across a broken mast to reach the exit teleporter.

With the Ghost Ship Chart, the Ghost Ship's location is marked on your Sea Chart. It only shows up at night, near one of a few different islands (the fish usually mention it). Catch up with it (use the Song of Passing) and win a fight in its hold.

5 There's a trio of bomb ships hanging out to the northwest of Needle Rock Isle. Blow up the golden-coloured one with your Bomb Cannon and search where it sank to get this Triforce Chart **(04)**.

6 Behind Link's grandmother's house on Outset Island, climb up onto the cliff ledges and Hookshot the tree at the top of the bluff **(04)**. Move the giant rock to open the entrance to the Savage Labyrinth **(05)** – 50 levels packed to the gills with monsters. Prepare yourself for a long, gruelling bout, as the sixth Triforce Chart is on the 30th floor, behind another seal requiring the Wind's Requiem. It's not as hard as you might think, but it wouldn't be a bad idea to bring an Elixir Soup and as many Fairies or Potions as possible.

7 At Stone Watcher Island, move the statue head and drop into the hole. Enter each room and slay all the monsters inside to light the torch above each door. Doing so will unleash a posse of Knights in the main area, but their deaths will unlock the final gate. Go inside and play the Wind's Requiem to get the Chart.

8 Hookshot to the topmost tower at Overlook Island, and drop down inside. You'll have to pass tests that involve beating the pudding out of three or more enemies at once, before being admitted into the chamber that holds this Chart. Play the Triumph of Winds.






DANDY WARHOLS POUTY * THE DONNAS LOUTY * DEFTONES SHOUTY * MARC BOLAN DEAD
BANG
IT'S ONLY ROCK 'N' ROLL
HOT HOT HEAT
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a finger on the trigger
PLUS
ELECTRIC SIX
THE CARDIGANS
EVAN DANDO
SUGABABES
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EVERYTHING
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THE TIPS YOU NEED FOR THE GAMES YOU'RE PLAYING...

TIPS EXTRA



YOUR MOST WANTED TIPS

SUMMONER: A GODDESS REBORN

LOADS OF EXP

Once you've beaten the Sepulchre and enter Meridian's Pass, follow the wall to the right, all the way from the entrance until you find a statue called the White Lady. Get Sangril to use her crossbow in first-person mode and aim to shoot the coloured gongs in the following order to raise the bridges up to the statue. First Bridge: Red, Yellow, Blue. Second Bridge: Orange, Green, Yellow, Red. Third Bridge: Blue, Orange, Red, Yellow, Green. Do this correctly and you'll get 15,000 EXP points.

ARROWHEAD QUEST

The moment you get off the talking boat, find the arrowheads in Hopris by turning right and looking at the foot of the first pillar you see. They are hidden there.

EASY MONEY

In Munari City, head to the area where you can play Survival. Play the game and pay 1,000 gold. If you're good enough you'll get 5,000 gold back easily – and it's not that tough anyway! This is also a good source of EXP as you can get points for killing off all the monsters.

Another good way of getting cash is a little bit sneakier. When you're in Munari City head for the Mas Ora's district and go to the House of Soleil. It's the first house on the left as you enter the region. When you arrive, speak to the man who's asking for a loan of 1,000 gold. Give it to him and he will give you a Bodril. Keep the Bodril and continue on your quests. But come back from time to time to check on the man.

After a while he'll offer to pay you your gold back. Refuse and then ask to buy the Bodril off him for 5,000 gold. When he asks if you really want to buy it, refuse again and he'll give you 1,200 gold back. Once the conversation ends, don't leave. Keep talking to him about the same thing over and over – you'll receive 1,200 in gold each time you do it. If you leave the area, though, he'll disappear, so stock up on as much gold as you need before continuing.

NGC READER KNOWLEDGE!

In Pikmin, when you're feeding on the nectar, use the C-stick to ensure the Pikmin get an even share of it. That way you limit the number of stragglers when you move around the environment.
Mark Davies, Cardiff

HIDDEN ITEMS

In Meridian's Pass you'll come across pirates who run away. If you follow them they'll lead you to a hidden cave, where you'll find some rather nice items.



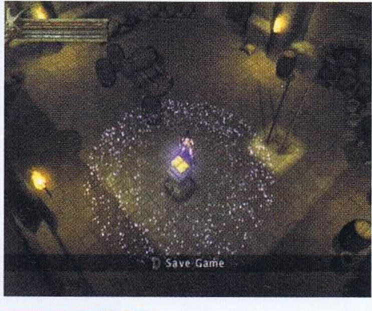
EVOLUTION SKATEBOARDING

HIDDEN CHARACTERS

If you finish the game with any character, on 100 per cent and with all the coins collected, you can unlock hidden skaters. Highlight one of the default skaters, press X and you'll be able to access the corresponding character:

Mark Appleyard **Raiden**
Colin McKay **Solid Snake**
Arto Sarri **Gorilla**
Chris Senn **Gurlukovich 2**
Kerry Getz **Vampire Killer**
Steve Williams **Frogger**
Edited Skater **Grey**
Rick McCrank **Gurlukovich 1**





TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER

EASY LIVES

When you go to the Rainbow Cliff area from another location, a free life will appear. Follow the gully on the right of Julius' lab, and you'll find the extra life at the end. Go back and forth from any level and then head back to Rainbow Cliff to claim as many free lives as you want.

ZOOMERANG

Collect 15 Golden Cogs to unlock.

MULTIRANG

Collect 20 Golden Cogs to unlock.

INFRARANG

Collect 30 Golden Cogs to unlock

ENDING BONUS

When you complete the game with all Cogs, Eggs and Opals found, you'll get 100 per cent completion. This will allow you to unlock a bonus level, an extra FMV sequence after the ending credits and a Movies option on the Extras menu.

BALDUR'S GATE DARK ALLIANCE

PLAY AS DRIZZT

Create a new game and highlight and select one of the game's three main characters. Hold down the L and R buttons and press them until the game finishes loading.

EXTREME MODE

If you beat the Gauntlet level it will unlock extreme difficulty.

DUPLICATE ITEMS

Save the game and drop all the items in your inventory from the character you're currently controlling. Then change your character. Import the character from the game you just saved. They should have all the items in the inventory, and you can pick up the items you dropped. Save your game again and use the Recall Potion to take you back to Elfsong. Drop all your expensive items and change again to your recently saved character. Pick up all the items again and sell them on. Do this as many times as you like, but always save your character!

READERS' TOP TEN TIPS

Send in your hint-tastic helps and maybe we'll 'sort you out' with whatever we can find in Geraint's magic drawer. But NO BUTTON CODES!



1. TUROK EVOLUTION

Bish bash boss

Lead the boss over to the crashed plane by the waterfall. Go behind the plane and crouch underneath it. From here you can shoot him without fear of getting damage.
Kevin O'Sullivan, Lancashire

2. METROID PRIME

Wave of health

Bombus are the best source of health in the game and they, helpfully, appear frequently. So use charged Wave Blasts to kill them.
Jake Simmons, Northants

3. ACE GOLF

Safe shots

This is really useful if you're struggling in a competition. Press Start before an important shot, and then press Return to the main menu. This will save your current game, so if you mess up your shot all you have to is reset your machine and have another go.
Chris Nicholls, Sheffield

4. ROCKY

All boxers, arenas and movies

Hold down R on the main menu screen. Then press right three times, left once and then press the L-button.
Ashley Brown, Hallsham

5. 007 NIGHTFIRE

Multiplayer characters

Use the code DENTAL to unlock Jaws and the code BLIMP to unlock Max Zorin in multiplayer.
Jordan Kwok, Newcastle

6. TONY HAWK'S 4

Watch all movies

When you go to the Spend Cash menu, buy all five movies. Watch them, and make sure you don't save the game afterwards. Instead, reset your Gamecube and then use the money you spent on something else.
Philip Heasman, Peterborough

7. BEACH SPIKERS

Space Channel 5 costume

If you create a new team in World Tour mode and then enter ARAKATA as your first player's name, you will unlock the *Space Channel 5* costume.
Lisa Erridge, Bournemouth

8. ETERNAL DARKNESS

Monster finder

A good way to find out whether you're alone at any given moment is to try and save the game in the Pause menu. If the game refuses to let you do this, then you know there be monsters to kill somewhere nearby.
Michael Rosenstock, Wicklow

9. MARIO PARTY 4

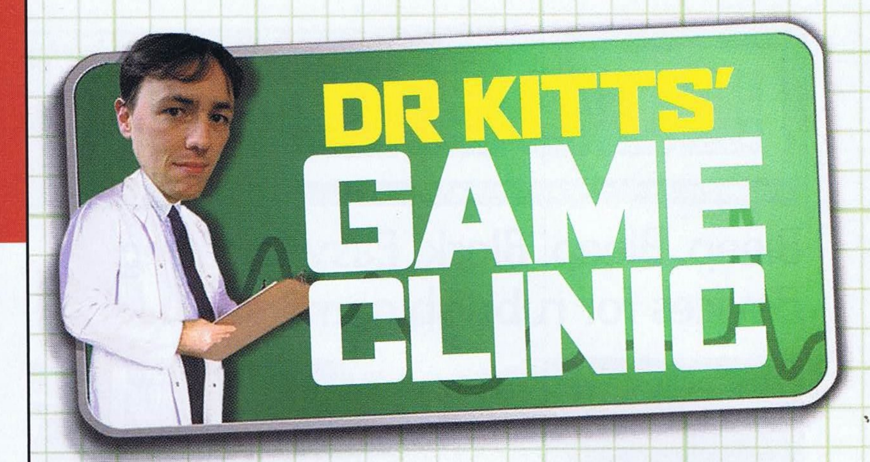
Taunt tones

As you probably know, in *Mario Party 4* you can taunt by pressing the L-button. Well, to make things a bit more interesting, you can also change the tone of the taunt if you wiggle the C-stick – simple things…
Tom Hill, Berkshire

10. TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER

Different languages

Find your way to the Ship Rex level and get chatting to the friendly Red Seahorse. She'll natter on for a while and then, if you wait long enough, she'll start wittering on in a foreign language… weird, huh? (***Yes, weird. Although this isn't technically a tip, is it? I mean, it's not really helping anyone with their game. Do try harder next time – Ed***)
Kelly Watts, Swindon



Under-the-counter advice from your friendly gaming pharmacist…



Dr Kitts,
How do I beat the Omega Pirate in *Metroid Prime*. No matter how hard I try he destroys me every time.
Chris McDonnell, via email

Dr Kitts gently lowers another 'patient' into a bath full of acid…
Super Missiles are the key here. They do the most damage and so you can beat him faster. Keep your Power Beam charged and wait untill he uses his Power Wave attack (by smashing his fists on the floor). Jump over it and launch a Super Missile at one of his body parts. As soon as you knock out all four of his body parts, he'll become invisible. Switch to your X-ray visor and ignore the other enemies. Focus only on the Pirate. With your Power Beam already charged, you should be able to get two Super Missile hits in while he's invisible. Just make sure you keep your eye on the three pools of Phazon so that you can target him the moment he starts to feed. Repeat this process and he'll be toast in no time.

Dr Kitts,
I've managed to finish most of the games on *Sonic Mega Collection* but I still haven't unlocked all the extra hidden games? What do I have to do to get at them?
Ally Marsden, Cheshire

Dr Kitts slices through the soft underbelly with a scalpel, and grins…
To unlock Blue Spheres *you either need a* Phantasy Star Online *save on your memory card or you need to play* Sonic 1 *and* Sonic 3D Blast *20 times each. You can do this fast by entering in and out of each game in quick succession.*

To Unlock Knuckles in Sonic 2, *play* Spinball *and* Sonic 2 *20 times each. For* Sonic 3 and Knuckles, *play* Sonic 3 *and* Sonic and Knuckles *20 times each. For* Flicky *you either need a* Sonic Adventure 2: Battle *save on your memory card or you need to play* Bean Machine *20 times.*

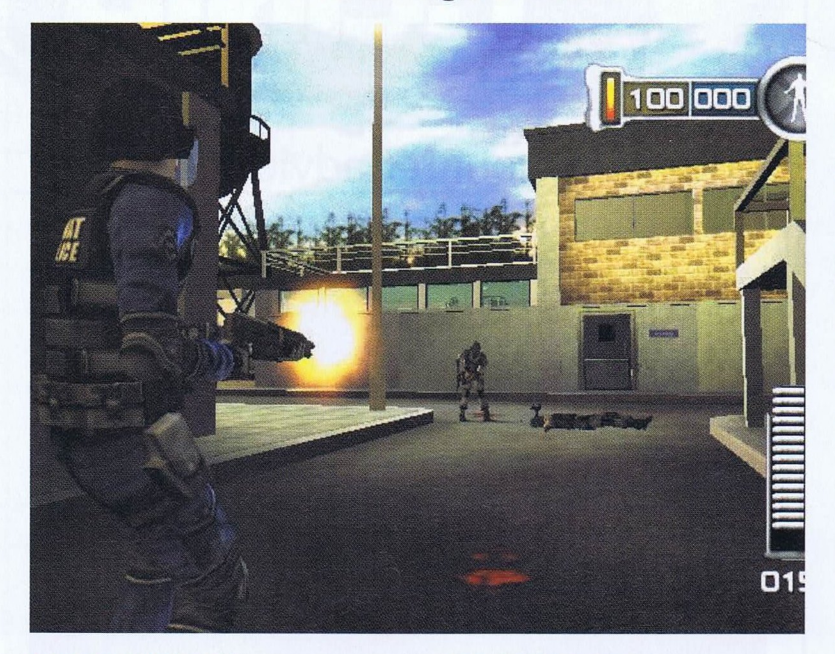
Lastly, to get the lovely Ristar *you have to play all the main games 20 times.*

Dr Kitts,
I'm stuck in the Chinese cinema watching *Die Hard Vendetta*. I know it sounds daft but I've walked everywhere and I just can't get anywhere. Is there something I've missed?
Anon, somewhere

Dr Kitts slips out of the women's toilets unnoticed…
It's an easy oversight to make if you happened to miss the clue. If you look at the balcony in the cinema you'll see a banner. Shoot this and one corner will come down, allowing you to climb up.



Bleep. Bleep. Blork. Easy cheating devices for rubbish gamers…



DIE HARD VENDETTA

Enter these button codes on the main menu screen and correct entry will be confirmed.

- **Small Heads** L, L, R, L
- **Big Heads** R, R, L, R
- **Pinheads** B, X, Y, B, X, Y
- **Level select** X, Y, Z, Z, X, Y, Z, Z
- **Invincibility** L, R, L, R, L, R, L, R
- **Unlimited Hero Time** B, X, Y, Z, L, R
- **Flame on** X, Y, B, X, Y, B
- **Hot fists** L, L, X, B, Y, L, L
- **Exploding fists** R, R, Y, B, X, R, R
- **Exploding bullets** L, R, Z, Y, B
- **Liquid metal textures** B, Y, X, B, Y, X

ATV QUAD POWER RACING 2

Are we kind to you or what? Enter the codes below as profile names and you'll be able to access whichever of the following tickle your fancy:

- **GENERALLEE** All ATVs
- **BUBBA** All riders
- **FIDDLERSELBOW** All tricks
- **ROADKILL** All tracks
- **GINGHAM** Maximum stats
- **DOUBLEBARREL** Challenges
- **REDROOSTER** Champs





BONUS ATVS

- Finish ATV Academy Training and Trick Training and you will unlock Dimension and Viper ATVs.

- If you win eight races or more (well, why not?) in Arcade mode you'll be able to unlock the ATC ATV.

TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER

UNLOCK GALLERY PICTURES

While playing the game quickly press **L, R, L, R, Y, Y, A, A, Z, B, Z, B**

UNLIMITED HEALTH

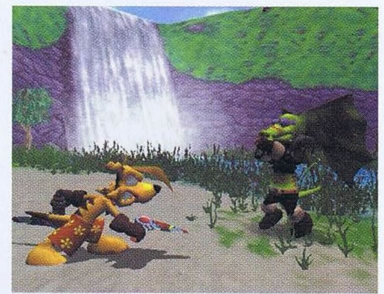
At the Press Start screen quickly press **L, R, L, R, Y, Y, Y, Y, X, X**

TECHNORANGS

While playing the game press **L, R, L, R, Y, Y, Y, B, Y, B**

SHOW OBJECTS

While you're playing the game press **L, R, L,**



R, Y, Y, X, B, B, X, Z, Z. Doing this will reveal the locations of all the hidden Opals, Golden Cogs, Biblies, Scales, and Thunder Eggs. They'll be indicated by coloured lines coming out of the sky.

ELEMENTAL BOOMERANGS, AQUARANG

While playing the game press **L, R, L, R, Y, Y, B, B, Y, B**

BALDUR'S GATE DARK ALLIANCE

INVINCIBILITY AND LEVEL WARP

Flex those fingers and hold the L-button all the way down, hold the R-button a little way down and hold the Y-button down. Thought we'd go easy on you? Oh no. Then hold down Left on the D-pad and, keeping all of them pressed down the right amounts, tap Start.

ALL FEATS AND SPELLS

And again… this time hold the L-button all the way down and hold the R-button a little way down. Press the X-button down and hold down Right on the D-pad. Phew.



Found an interesting cheat, tip, secret or quirky thing in one of your games? Then send it into us immediately! Each month we'll stick the best into our Readers' Tips section. In return, if your tip is the number one readers' tip, we'll send you a fantastic, amazing prize. Good, huh?

YOUR TOP TIPS Share the knowledge and bag yourself a prize…

HERE'S MY TOP TIP...

IT'S FOR

AND THIS IS HOW IT WORKS

Name ....

Address ....

.... **Postcode** ....

Send to:
TIPS EXTRA, **NGC**, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW or email ngc@futurenet.co.uk

If you don't want to cut up your magazine, send a photocopy instead, and continue on another bit of paper if you run out of room. Or just buy two copies of the mag, so that we can afford to buy Geraint a dictionary.



COME, LITTLE BESTLINGS! FOLLOW THE PIPER INTO THE LEAGUE MOUNTAINS WHERE SHINY TREATS AWAIT THEE! MWAHAHA…

I'M THE BEST

It's a sad day indeed in the foetid cave where we house the febrile bonobo monkeys who keep fed the modified Jazz Loom that churns this crap out every month. For as of next issue, I'm The Best is… changing, becoming… *stronger*, more… POWERFUL than ever before! Geraint and Dan have spent long mornings imbibing wine in the car park to come up with revamped leagues the likes of which the earth has NEVER SEEN! Healthy competition and jocular rivalry are no more. From now on, the unholy force that drives ITB will be one of naked greed, animal cunning and outright hostility. Next month, all will be unleashed…

1



STAR PERFORMANCE

"Interesting profile of me in last month's mag," writes Dave Every. "Not entirely accurate, although I have to say I do like my tea. As for how many joypads I get through, you don't get scores like that by mistreating your equipment, you know. It's a caress, not a press! Ha ha!" Wise words indeed. Dave also tells us he's taking some time off to "pay a visit to Tallon IV" – floor's open, folks!

Anyway, enough of such piffling flim-flam and the frothy talk of corseted ladies – there's one man who has you all "beated", to use one of Geraint's more local bon mots, "roight bad" this month.

Indeed, such was his achievement, that neither the fact that his entry was accompanied by some of the most self-important blustering this side of a WWE pre-match shout-fest, nor that it arrived insultingly recorded on a Cube magazine video, blunted the decision to begrudgingly award **AM Hickling** (at least, we think that's his name) of **Goole** (snigger) Star Performance. Hickling has forsaken quick 15-minutes-of-fame thrills to go for the big 'un: Platinum awards in all 66 levels in *Timesplitters 2*. Not bad, huh? Think about it – it's not. Have a joypad, man. Next!

WANT MORE FROM ITB? SEND IN YOUR THINKS!

2

HOW TO PROVE YOUR ACHIEVEMENT

When sending us evidence of your gaming achievements, it's useful to follow these steps…

PHOTOGRAPHS

If you're sending us evidence of the photographic variety:

1. Turn off the camera's flash (or cover it up) to prevent it from reflecting off the screen.
2. Draw the curtains to eradicate sunlight.
3. Use a fast film (200 or 400 ASA).
4. If you're using a digicam then use a slower shutter speed.
5. Point at the screen and click away.

PLEASE NOTE: In the past we've had experience of certain scamps 'fiddling' with their photographic evidence, so this time round we're being extra-specially (is that right?) careful. We would, in fact, welcome video evidence over photographic evidence. If, however, you can only send photos, be warned: any doubts over the legality of your entry will lead to instant disqualification, and jeering.

VIDEO

If you're going to be sending us the evidence that comes on a tape, follow these instructions carefully:

1. Plug the TV lead from the Gamecube into the Signal In socket of your video.
2. Connect the Signal Out socket on your video to your TV.
3. Find a spare channel on the video and search for the signal.
4. After completing and recording the challenge, rewind the tape and send it in.

NGC YOUR BEST PERFORMANCE

3

HERE'S MY BEST PERFORMANCE…

LUIGI'S MANSION
Total number of Gs..........
Time taken to beat final boss..........

SONIC 2
Juggernaut Level number of rings..........
Escape from the Military Base best time..........

ROGUE LEADER
Battle of Endor kills..........
Death Star Attack accuracy..........
Star Destroyer fastest time..........

TONY HAWK'S 3
The Foundry highest score..........
Canada highest trick combo..........
Rio highest score..........

WAVE RACE
Aspen Lake best race time..........
Lost Temple Lagoon stunt score..........
Southern Island lap time..........

TIMESPLITTERS 2
Highest score in Fight Off the Living Dead..........
Best time in Pane in the Neck..........
Best time in Escape from Neo Tokyo..........

MARIO SUNSHINE
Best time on Il Piantissimo's Sand Sprint..........
Best time on Il Piantissimo's Crazy Climb..........

SUPER SMASH BROS
Highest score in Home Run..........
Highest juggle combo..........
Quickest time in 100-man melee..........

SUPER MONKEY BALL
Fastest time on Frozen Highway..........
Highest score on Monkey Target..........
Fastest time on Advanced Floor 2..........

Name..........

Address..........

Postcode..........

Send to:
I'M THE BEST, **NGC** Magazine,
30 Monmouth Street,
Bath, BA1 2BW

If you don't want to cut up your magazine, send a photocopy instead, and continue on another bit of paper if you run out of room. Or just write with something other than finger-paints, or your bloody stumps.

I'M THE BEST

See them names? You ain't there, you ain't nuthin'…

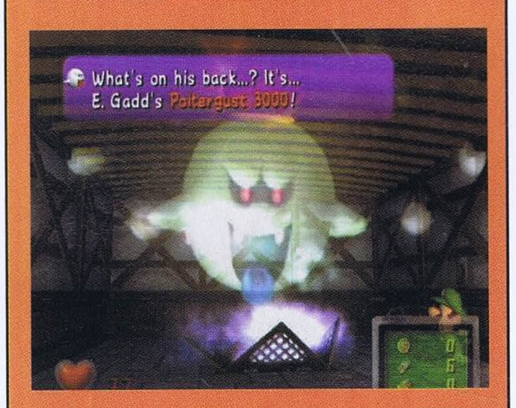
LUIGI'S MANSION





See how many Gs you can notch up at the end of the game.

1	John Dawson, Hull	186,375,000G
2	Sean Hinton, Kidderminster	185,710,000G
3	Daniel Mitchell, East Sussex	184,440,000G
4	Jamie Butters, East Sussex	184,060,000G
5	Mark Richardson, Leeds	183,575,000G



See how long it takes you to dispose of the final boss.

1	Lee Geary, Armagh	116 secs
2	Bent Eigil Sumelius, Norway	121 secs
3	Tim Wingate, Tyne & Wear	122 secs
4	Grover Mitchell, Newport	139 secs
5	Alex Gough, Rochdale	142 secs

We'll need cast-iron proof of both of these in either photographic or video form – and for the boss encounter, we'll only actually accept videos. Take a look over at the previous page for tips on how to record your triumphs.

STAR WARS: ROGUE LEADER



Most kills on Battle of Endor (you must win at least a Bronze medal).

1	Adam Goodwin, Anglesey	274
2	Kevin Ibbotson, Dublin	241
3	Dave Every, Cheshire	221
4	Joe Newman, London	191
5	David Gamble, Antrim	175



Highest accuracy on Death Star Attack (video evidence only, please).

1	Kevin Ibbotson, Dublin	96%
2	Kieran Cornwell, London	93%
3	Chris Fletcher, Stockport	86%
4	Jack Gill, Northallerton	83%
5	Anthony Musson, Preston	82%

Fastest time achieved taking out the Star Destroyer in Razor Rendezvous.

1	Lewis Voigtländer-Ford, Milton Keynes	0:21
2	Simon Thomas, Solihull	0:22
3	Gavin Maidment, Surrey	0:23
4	Dave Every, Cheshire	0:24
5	Richard Dunn, Boston	0:26

Lissen up, fools. On Death Star Attack, what we don't want to see is you shooting three TIEs with homing torpedoes for 100 per cent accuracy – that's for maggots. Know what we mean? We want to see video footage of REAL skill. Pics are fine for the other two.

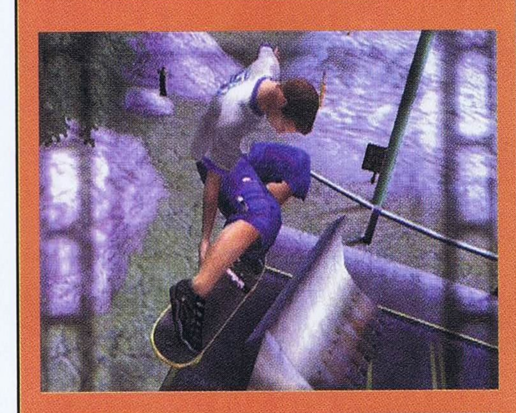
TONY HAWK'S 3





Highest point score on The Foundry level.

1	Andrew Nizinskyj, Barnsley	13,228,348
2	Lee Robinson, Notts	4,489,945
3	John Copeland, Co Durham	4,203,016
4	David Peacock, Co Durham	3,886,325
5	Mickey Ieronymides, St Albans	3,255,466



Highest trick combo on the Canada level.

1	Andrew Nizinskyj, Barnsley	8,195,915
2	Lee Robinson, Notts	4,489,945
3	David Peacock, Co Durham	3,886,325
4	Gary Lord, Hull	2,173,200
5	John Copeland, Co Durham	1,879,038

Highest score on the Rio level.

1	Andrew Nizinskyj, Barnsley	12,948,744
2	Daniel Rouse, High Wycombe	7,039,117
3	Mickey Ieronymides, St Albans	4,225,882
4	David Bennett, Isle of Man	4,095,129
5	Andrew Cooper, Surrey	3,786,550

Remember, Tony Hawk's 3 is blinkin' hard – maybe even harder than Advanced Calculus – which means you'll need to put in the hours. Once you have, get us your proof of the end screen in either photographic or, preferably, videographic form. Ta very much.

SEND YOUR ENTRIES TO... I'M THE BEST, NGC MAGAZINE, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW

I'M THE BEST

WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM



Your best race time on Aspen Lake in Normal mode.

1	Paul Holmes, Edinburgh	0'21"144
2	Richard Dunn, Boston	1'00"479
3	John Dawson, Hull	1'01"614
4	Daniel Dunn, Boston	1'01"633
5	Dave Every, Cheshire	1'00"890



Your best stunt score on Lost Temple Lagoon.

1	Richard Dunn, Boston	36,104
2	John Dawson, Hull	35,783
3	Steven Lockwood, Bradford	35,545
4	Ben Tatlow, London	33,160
5	Jon East, Manchester	26,254

Your best lap time on Southern Island in Normal mode.

1	John Dawson, Hull	0'16"106
2	Dave Every, Cheshire	0'16"276
3	Daniel Dunn, Boston	0'16"587
4	James Stock, Norwich	0'18"248
5	Andrew Cooper, Surrey	0'18"712

Fancy some? Again, we'll need cast-iron proof of your achievements – video is our choice medium, although we may also accept some photographic evidence, provided – of course – that it hasn't been altered or messed with in some way.

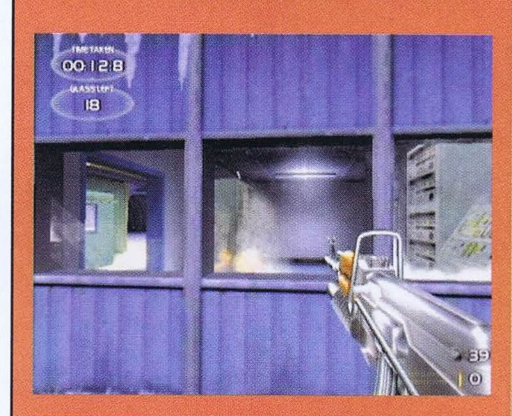
TIMESPLITTERS 2





Your highest score in the Fight Off the Living Dead challenge...

1	Paul Marke, Southampton	608,700
2	Dave Every, Cheshire	339,725
3	Gabe Harry, Hereford	296,975
4	Jonathan Cross, Manchester	281,600
5	AM Hickling, Goole	277,500



Your best time in the Pane in the Neck challenge...

1	Dave Every, Cheshire	7.4 secs
2	David Gamble, Antrim	7.7 secs
3	Lewis Voigtländer-Ford, M Keynes	8.2 secs
=	AM Hickling, Goole	8.2 secs
4	Will Tansley, Horsham	8.6 secs

Your best time in the Escape from Neo Tokyo challenge...

1	Jonathan Cross, Manchester	12.7 secs
2	Lewis Voigtländer-Ford, M Keynes	15.7 secs
3	AM Hickling, Goole	16.0 secs
4	David Gamble, Antrim	16.7 secs
=	Aurelio Wood, Essex	16.7 secs

The challenges in TS2 are some of the toughest around, so you'll need to keep your wits about you if you want to beat these scores, especially on the Fight Off the Living Dead challenge. A clear photo of the results screen will suffice for all three.

SONIC ADVENTURE 2





How many rings you can get at the end of the Juggernaut chase section.

1	Tim Osborne, Staffordshire	453
2	William Thomas, Shropshire	440
3	Adam Ely, Weybridge	437
4	Tom Sherwood, Cheshire	413
5	David Smith, Bothwell	379



What time you can notch up on Escape from the Military Base.

1	David Waters, Essex	01:39:14
2	Tim Osborne, Staffordshire	01:42:27
3	Tom Sherwood, Cheshire	01:42:52
4	Barry Templeton, Kilmarnock	01:43:57
5	David Smith, Bothwell	01:46:70

Only the fastest need apply for this challenge. And we'll need video evidence for both of these beauties, too.





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I'M THE BEST

See them names? You ain't there, you ain't nuthin'...

SUPER SMASH BROS





How far can you hit the bag? We want to see your highest score in Home Run.

1	Ben Turner, Kent	974.3m
2	Dave Every, Cheshire	602.6m
3	John Dawson, Hull	563.5m
4	David Smith, Bothwell	523.1m
5	Dean Hailstone, Tyne & Wear	508.9m



How many juggle combo hits can you get in before your foe hits the ground?

1	John Rothwell, Wallasey	999
2	Dave Every, Cheshire	139
3	Michael Kimberley, Bishops Itchington	82
4	Ry Morgan, Moray	29
5	Tom Lyth, Manchester	25

Your quickest time in 100-Man Melee, using Mario only.

1	Gavin Maidment, Surrey	02:23:30
2	Richard Dunn, Boston	02:24:70
3	Dave Every, Cheshire	02:25:36
4	Aidan McGinley, Co Donegal	02:27:40
5	Dean Hailstone, Tyne & Wear	02:29:06

Just as there's more than one way to skin a cat, there's more than one way to smack a bag – which is why we want videoed evidence of your attempt at the first challenge. Same goes for the juggle combo challenge – although we'll accept pics for 100-man melee.

MARIO SUNSHINE





Your best time on Il Piantissimo's Sand Sprint (Gelato Beach).

1	Aaron Fielder, Glastonbury	10:15
2	Dean Hailstone, Tyne & Wear	10:35
3	Lee Geary, Armagh	10:36
4	John Dawson, Hull	10:40
5	Sean Hinton, Kidderminster	10:50



Your best time in Il Piantissimo's Crazy Climb (Pianta Village).

1	Dave Every, Cheshire	16:32
2	Lee Geary, Armagh	16:43
3	Aaron Fielder, Glastonbury	16:80
=	Daniel Rouse, High Wycombe	16:80
5	Mark Williamson, Rotherham	17:87

Two timed challenges from the best Mario game since the last one – videoed evidence is, as ever, preferable, but we'll accept photos as long as they clearly show the end of each challenge with your final score displayed. You heard.



SUPER MONKEY BALL





Your fastest time on the Frozen Highway stage in Monkey Race...

1	Stephen Topple, Ipswich	0:52:40
2	John Dawson, Hull	0:53:72
3	David Smith, Bothwell	0:54:55
4	Sean Hinton, Kidderminster	0:55:20
5	Michael Rothwell, Wallasey	0:55:71



Highest score on Monkey Target (with Wheel of Danger turned off).

1	Dave Every, Cheshire	8,970
2	Pavel Sikorsky, London	6,050
3	Adam Williams, Exeter	4,380
4	Will Prendergast, Berkshire	3,020
5	Simon Mason, Bournemouth	2,850

Your fastest time on Advanced Floor 2 in the Main Game (Time Remaining).

1	Sean Hinton, Kidderminster	53:08
2	Dave Every, Cheshire	54:85
3	David Smith, Bothwell	54:78
4	Michael Rothwell, Wallasey	54:73
5	John Dawson, Hull	54:56

We'll want a picture of your monkey crossing the finish line for the first challenge, but a simple picture of the results screen will suffice for the other two. And don't forget to turn the Wheel of Danger off for the second challenge – there's really no point. At all.

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30 MONMOUTH STREET/BATH/BA1 2BW

EMAIL US!

Got something to say? Run out of stamps? Guards won't let you near a pen? Then log on to the interweb and 'get' us 'at'...

ngc@futurenet.co.uk

...right now! And if we're in the mood, we might even send you a reply.



STAR LETTER

WIN YOURSELF A BRAND NEW GAMECUBE GAME!



'Overheard a lady'

As an owner of a NES, SNES and N64 I was, like everyone else, eagerly awaiting the release of the Gamecube. Unfortunately though, the waiting seemed to go on and on until I couldn't wait any longer, and, weakened, I bought a PS2.

After hearing of Dixons' decision to sell the Cube at £100 with free game, I thought this was the time to get back on board. I went along to the store closest to my workplace but they'd sold out, as had the shop in my town centre. Fortunately, while there I overheard a lady saying that Argos were selling the Cube at £78. Fantastic. Off I went. For my £78 I got a black Gamecube, free game (*Mario Sunshine* – just beautiful) and a memory card.

Although not part of Nintendo's marketing plan, these price cuts could be exactly what's needed. A boost in sales, followed by another boost with the release of *Metroid* could finally see Nintendo get the market share their software deserves. Okay, so you won't be able to get one at Dixons, but this could turn out to be their loss. Personally, it was just great to hear all the familiar game sounds again and to be sat playing on a system which has a soul. No other system can compete on this score.

Then yesterday I bought my first copy of **NGC**. It's good to be back.

David Mitchell, via email

And it's nice to have you back, David. The Dixons and Argos price-cutting manoeuvres might have underlined a very real worry with the Gamecube, but the resulting sales and the brilliant deals that were offered to gamers meant it was hugely positive, overall. Let's hope that with the release of Zelda, Gamecube can maintain some of its recently-gained momentum, eh? Ed



'Behind'

People overreact when it comes to European release dates. Think about it. A game comes out in the States. Then another game comes out next month. Then we get the first game in three months' time, and the second one a month after that (the same one month the Americans had to wait). We are simply a few months 'behind'. But when the release dates are compared to other games we realise that after *Metroid* we have to wait six weeks for *Zelda*. The Americans had to wait 13 weeks for *Zelda* after *Metroid*! It's all about perspective. Yes, it's torture to see finished games, but while waiting, we can play another game that has just crawled its way from Japan. In addition, we can be sure of the game's quality (due to many reviews) when the game hits our shores.

Janne Kaitila, Finland

All very level-headed and sensible, for which we applaud you. And while you make an extremely good point about Zelda, the stony, cynical chunks of ice that we call our hearts can't let go go of the fact that, while we get the game a mere six weeks after the US, it's still 19 weeks since it was released in Japan. Humbug! Meanwhile, on a related note... Ed

'Fed up of waiting'

I was over the moon when I got my Freeloader, as it meant I could finally play *Animal Crossing*, which everyone seemed to be harping on about – and I can see why now. But will the Freeloader kill future releases of PAL games? I mean, everyone is up in arms, saying 'give *Animal Crossing* a PAL release', and then they go and buy a Freeloader and the US version (like myself, I have to admit), so Nintendo must wonder what the point in doing a PAL version is when most people have already got the NTSC version. I'm fed up of waiting for PAL versions of games and will continue to buy the US and Japanese versions (at a hefty price), although I think that the Freeloader could spell the death of future PAL releases.

Karl Watson, Chorley

There simply aren't enough importers around to make the non-release of PAL games a possibility. However, Nintendo are obviously wary of releasing niche games such as Animal Crossing, and if plenty of people have the NTSC version, then it means less copies sold if the game eventually does get released in Europe. But anyway: Nintendo, please release Animal Crossing in Europe, and we'll all be very happy indeed. (Reckon that'll work?) Ed



Bonus Letters

I like the bit with the flying monkeys.
Alexis Goles, via email
Pfft. Everybody likes that bit. Ed

Perhaps the passenger was a drittle bit lunk?
Ross Kelly, via email
Oh, the blinding wit. Ed

Does Shigsy sit down every day at his hippy desk and think "Now how could I create a game that will brainwash people?"
Arthur Plant, via email
Hippy desk. Brilliant. Ed

Oh, and what score would you have given *Starfox Adventures* if Rare hadn't gone to Microsoft?
Thomas Grove, via email
72 per cent. Now grow up. Ed

If they would make a game about Barbie, you'd be the first to play it.
Kolic Shpend, via email
We have a winner for the coveted Best Name of The Month award! Ed



'Fiddles with'

When I was looking at scores and the overall score that tells you if the game is a great game or a lame game, I noticed that some scores had changed. For example, in issue 76 *Metroid Prime* was given 8 for Sound and Lifespan and an overall score of 96, then in issue 79 you changed Sound to 9, Lifespan to 10 and gave it an overall score of 97! I've seen this happen with other games. Do some game suddenly get better and some get worse or is there someone who does the whole mag and fiddles with the score?

Norman Glover, via email

As you'll have noticed, we review the biggest games on import when they're released in America or Japan – like Metroid and Zelda – and then re-review them when the PAL version turns up. We'll change scores to more accurately reflect how we feel about them, having lived with them for a while. Plus, somebody different might have reviewed it,



HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Thanks to everyone else who wrote and emailed this month.

Chris Sutcliffe, via email; Thomas Sandifer, via email; Michael Fleming, via email; Josh Langley, via email; Rob Kuipers, via email; Michael Leask, via email; Johnny Briggs, Yorkshire; RinkyDink, Hyrule; Aamir Ilyas, via email; Seb Roberts, via email; Arun Sharma, Surrey; Alex Blyth, Scotland; Chris Dove, via email; Elaine Young, via email; Jonathan Price, via email; Erlend Wold, Norway; Martin le Mair, Netherlands; Christopher George, Scotland; Martin Banting, via email; Jason Mitchell, Farnham; Martin Brandt, Lewisham; Peter Litmaath, Netherlands; Dan Trupp, via email; Daniel

and thus have a different opinion. Whatever the reason, you can trust the PAL review to offer the definitive verdict. We've also taken the opportunity to tweak some scores for the budget reviews – like **Smash Bros** ***last issue. A brilliant game, to be sure, but Greener had a moment of madness when he gave it 95 per cent. Bless his hideously ugly countenance.*** **Ed**



'What happened?'

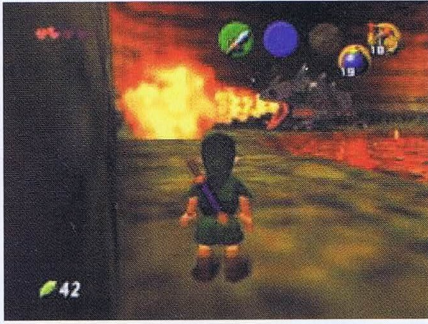
If you remember back a long, long, long time ago there used to be a magazine called Nintendo World. And eventually, they joined with you. But now when you look at **NGC**, there is not one mention of them. Do they still work for you? If not what happened to them?
Ben Dawson, Hull

Geraint is the last pitiful remnant of Nintendo World, a little like a journalistic coelacanth. Those of you that remember the magazine may rest easy, as it continues to live forever in his wizened, lemon-shaped head. **Ed**

'Prejudice'

I know Nintendo are going to give *Ocarina of Time* away with *The Wind Waker*, and I have been considering buying a Gamecube and sampling both games that way. Recently, however, I picked up *Ocarina of Time* and an N64 for £30 – when I first fired up the game it confirmed my prejudice. The graphics look really old and clunky. As I played, though, a strange – some may say even magical – thing started to happen. The landscape of Hyrule seemed to come alive. I noticed the low-res textures less and less and I grew more and more attached to Link (the plucky little fella). Suddenly, rather than being very dismissive of the old game, I found myself joining the people who see the new Link as an impostor. He just isn't the same character from *OOT*.

I guess the only way to view the new-look Link is to regard him as a totally different green-hatted little guy (if I read right, that is kind of the implication anyway.) But if they could keep Mario looking like Mario I think they should have kept Link looking like Link.
Stuart Watkinson, via email


△ Whatever form Rinkydink takes, you can guarantee some geek will moan about it. Geeks.

We were shocked at how **OOT** ***has aged too, but it just goes to show you can't keep a classic down. And as for the new Link – he does look like Link! Just a different style of Link. You're right, though, he is a completely different midget – but please give the game a chance. It is immeasurably more atmospheric, emotional and expressive in its use of cartoony visuals than*** **OOT** ***was.*** **Ed**

Bonus Letters

Is reading on the toilet multi-tasking?
Phil Greig, via email
It is for Dan, who's not used to doing two things at the same time. **Ed**

Why don't Nintendo sponsor the World Snooker Championships, because the sponsor before that was Benson & Hedges, but now they are not allowed to sponsor any sports now.
Lawrence Craddock, via email
I think you've just saved the Gamecube. **Ed**

You misread 'Tim' as 'Jim' when I sent in my high scores for *Sonic* which appeared in issue 79.
Jim Osborne, Staffordshire
Sorry Jim. **Ed**

Justify yourselves or I will run into your office bearing a knife, screaming "I chop you good!"
Andrew Curtis, King's Lynn
We need justify ourselves to no man. Chop away. **Ed**

'Tragic eventuality'

In light of recent suggestions that Nintendo would be better off 'doing a Sega' and going software-only, I have been pondering the idea of a single-format industry. No sooner had I pondered for one minute that I reasoned this would be a tragic eventuality (*Fast work – Ed*). Fair enough – with every developer working for the same hardware company we could expect an overwhelming choice of titles every week.

But this is by no means a good thing. Imagine a rookie developer like Retro Studios and picture them without the backing of Nintendo. In the overcrowded software market of a solitary format, Retro's seminal achievement with *Metroid Prime* (assuming the game is of their own invention, of course) would run the risk of failing. There would be no big advertising budget to shift the game to the masses. Indeed, for any small company that has so much money riding on one important release, failure in terms of sales would most definitely signal their demise. The majority of smaller developers would fail in the long term as they relentlessly strove to compete with the bigger boys. The thought of a single-format industry (especially under Sony's name) is just too disturbing to contemplate.
Gary Roberts, via email

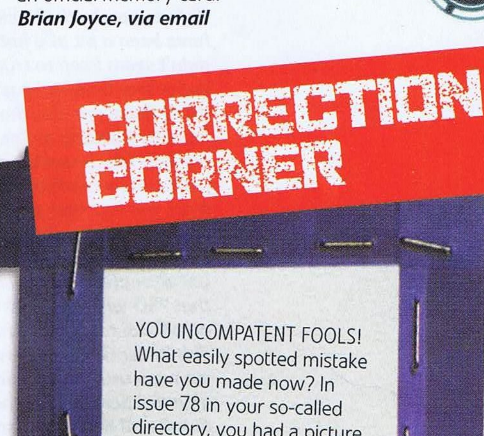
Competition is always a healthy thing, and you're right – without Nintendo's backing, and development help, **Metroid** ***would arguably not have been both a magnificent game and a smash hit. But rest easy – Nintendo definitely aren't going to 'do a Sega'.*** **Ed**

'Standard answer'

Okay, so being a veteran *PSO* player from the DC, I got my Cube, *PSO*, and broadband adaptor, just to find that if you go into an online lobby, with a third-party memory card, it'll get wiped instantly. This is confirmed by two of my friends – not good.

Have you heard anything of this nature? One of my buddies contacted Nintendo himself, and their answer was just that they do not endorse the use of unofficial products with the Cube (gotta be a standard answer, that).

Any assistance would be much appreciated, as it seems as though I have to throw away a couple of Level 50-plus characters, as they're not stored on an official memory card.
Brian Joyce, via email



CORRECTION CORNER

YOU INCOMPATENT FOOLS! What easily spotted mistake have you made now? In issue 78 in your so-called directory, you had a picture of *CLONE WARS* instead of *BOUNTY HUNTER*!

Sheer stupidity.
Maximilian MacEwan, via email

Almost as stupid as spelling incompetent wrong. Snigger. **Ed**

In your review of *Animal Crossing* a few months back, you claimed 'tanuki' was Japanese for 'raccoon'. You were sadly mistaken. 'Tanuki' translates as 'raccoon dog' or Nyctereutes Procyonoides if you'd prefer. It is a wild canine native to Japan and some parts of Asia, and is NOT fodder for Davey Crockett's hat. I found this quite disturbing and would appreciate an apology.
Aaron McKenzie, via email

If only all the missives we received were as erudite as yours. **Ed**

Lee, via email; Stig M. Stolstad, Norway; David Ponsford, via email; Morlock Rhys-Evans and his brother Eloi, Wales; Colin Squires, via email; Michael Luckett, Cheshire; Finola Fahey, Cork; Nikki Mustafa, London; Terry Scannell, via email; Marc Miles, via email; Luke James, via email; Andreas Strand, Norway; David Shannon, via email; Simon Mason, Bournemouth; Tom Smith, via email; Jon Coe, Sheffield; Michael Jones, Cornwall; Craig Simpson, Essex; Adam Sykes, via email; Callum Beckett, via email; Luke Alcott, via email; Tom Vickerman, via email; Sean O' Brien, Swindon; D J Fryer, via email; Jake Griggs, Basingstoke; Stefan, Germany; Gosen's Robot Fist, Mars; and far too many others to mention! So we won't mention them.

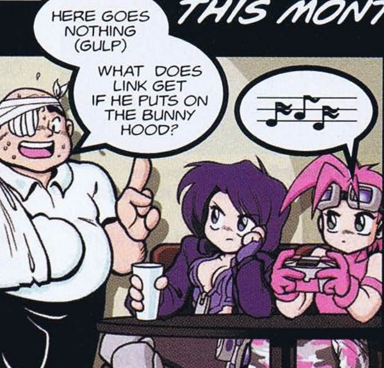
MAILBOX

"I suspect you put the mistakes in on purpose"

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WRITE TO... GRINTENDO/MAILBOX/NGC/30 MONMOUTH STREET/BATH/BA1 2BW/OR EMAIL NGC@FUTURENET.CO.UK

Unfortunately, the launch of PSO seems to have been a bit of a botched job. Nintendo didn't seem keen to trumpet the fact that the game saw Gamecube going online for the first time. There are also the huge problems people have had getting online with the modem adaptor (the broadband one seems to be relatively trouble-free), the fact that you shouldn't use Wavebirds online, and now the memory card issue. Unfortunately, it does seem that PSO will only work with an official card, something we didn't identify in our review, as we were using an official card anyway. Sorry about that. But despite all these problems, it's still a brilliant game indeed. Ed

'Ask him'

In response to Greg Lamb's 'Multiple Links' letter, *Wind Waker* has to come before *Ocarina Of Time*. We know that the Deku Tree is in *The Wind Waker*, but it is common Nintendo knowledge that it died in *OOT*. Also, Link's family in *Wind Waker* haven't appeared in any other Nintendo games. Then again, the only person who knows is Shigsy. You should ask him.
Anthony Conway, London



▲ The Deku Tree. Well, the first one anyway. Does anyone actually think this issue merits asking Shigsy? Really? Answers on a postcard...

We did. He said "Oh, for goodness' sake, haven't you got anything better to occupy yourself with? Leave me alone, I need a drink". Anyway, nice theory, but as you'll know by now, Wind Waker takes place 100 years after OOT. We expect the new Deku Tree to be some kind of fancy cel-shaded reincarnation of the old one. In fact, thinking about it, the Deku Tree was reborn as the Deku Sprout in OOT, so there you go. Or something. Ed

'This isn't possible'

In response to Joe Timms letter in issue 78, games are not 4D. They can never be. 4D is only theoretically the passing of time. And secondly, it isn't the passing of time. Time may have passed, but the passing of time has not happened. To have it 4D, you would have to come back in a thousand years to find your character has grown, (if not died and been buried), and so has everyone else, and if you come back in a million years the game's landscape would have to have changed. This isn't possible. The passing of time has got to have real-time elements to it, like buildings crumbling and the ageing of the landscape. Follow me?
Mark Nisbet, Scotland

To be entirely, brutally honest with you, Mark: no, not really. Ed

SO TELL ME THIS...

Meld your mind with the NGC Overbrain through the medium of pages and print.

1. When will *F-Zero* be out?
2. Is *Mario 128* going to be a *Mario 64* sequel?
3. Will Link be making an appearance in *Soul Calibur 2*?
James Smith, via email

1. 25th July in Japan, August in the US, and we wouldn't be surprised if it's September or October over here.
2. We really don't know.
3. Oh yes, as you can see in our review this issue.

1. Which is better, *Metroid Prime* or *The Wind Waker*?
2. If Nintendo are trying to make Gamecube 2, how much better will it be? A 128-bit machine will be hard to beat.
3. When is *Soul Calibur 2* out?
4. On your DVD why did the GC *Ura Zelda* have the N64 C-buttons on the top right-hand corner? Eh?
5. When is *Pro Evolution Soccer 2* out?
Daniel Luscombe, Hull

1. The office is split over this one. Perhaps Wind Waker, just, despite its faults.
2. Our future-seeing machines are on the blink at the moment. But perhaps through Nintendo's innate skills of make-betterness.
3. Autumn, for the UK.
4. They're not C-buttons, they're C-stick directions.
5. Don't expect ever to see it over here. Sob.

1. Will we see anything of a *Metroid Prime* sequel at E3?
2. Will Retro turn into Rare (ie try to take on too many projects)?
3. What's the handling like in *F-Zero GC*?
4. Who likes short-shorts?
Andy, Kidderminster

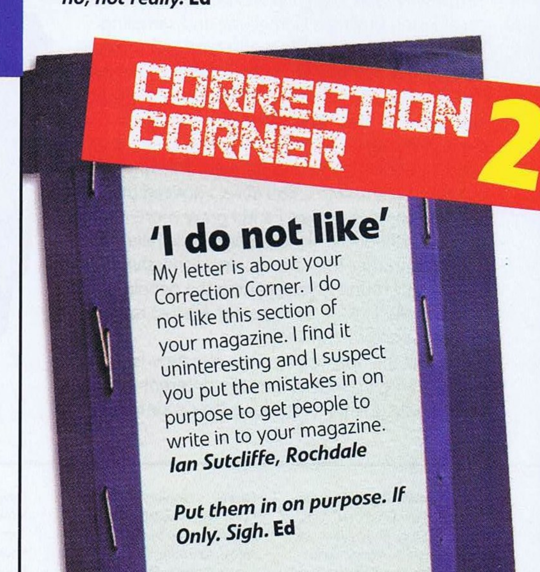
1. We hope so – but it's probably too early, as Retro will only have been working on the game for a few months.
2. Again, our lack of time-travel ability hinders us here. And we're not quite sure what you mean by Rare taking on too many projects.
3. Like F-Zero X, apparently.
4. We like short-shorts! And watch The Simpsons too.

Is there a Daredevil game out for the Gamecube? I'm a big Marvel comic book fan and can't wait for *Hulk* or *Wolverine's Revenge*.
Richard Pollock, Chester

There are no plans at the moment, unfortunately. There is, however, a rather underwhelming DD game available on Game Boy Advance. Depends on how desperate you are, really.

1. Why do you insist on calling Link 'Rinkydink'?
2. What does 'Wah' mean?
James Sinden, Bournemouth

1. Because that's his real name.
2. Many, many things. Justin Keeling didn't like it on his forehead, though. So we ruthlessly excised Japanese Dream Super News this issue. Wah wah wah wah wah!

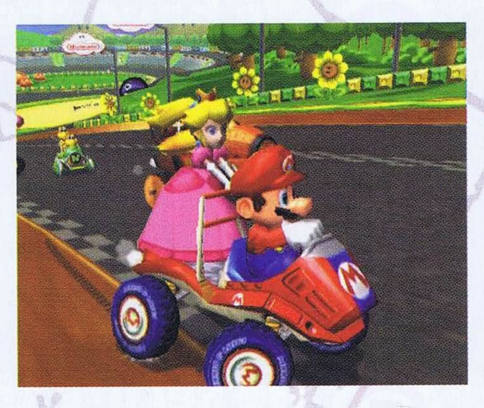


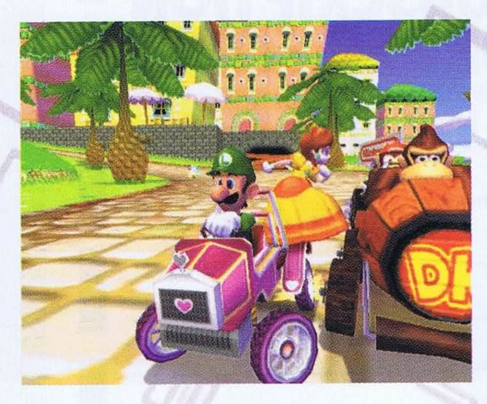
CORRECTION CORNER 2

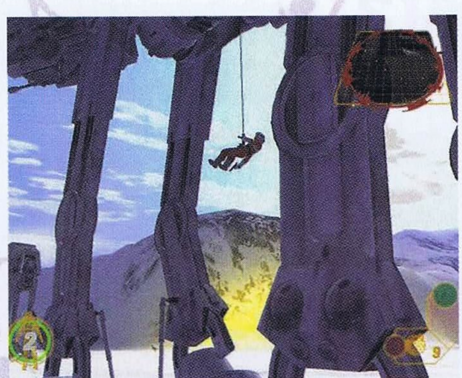
'I do not like'

My letter is about your Correction Corner. I do not like this section of your magazine. I find it uninteresting and I suspect you put the mistakes in on purpose to get people to write in to your magazine.
Ian Sutcliffe, Rochdale

Put them in on purpose. If Only. Sigh. Ed









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'HILARIOUS' GAMES TRIVIA AND JAPANESE SWEARING. IT'S ALL IN…

NGC COMPENDIUM

LEARNING JAPANESE

Opushon? Bounasu geimu? It's English with a dodgy Japanese accent, right?

Many gamers import action-based games before the Western release is available, because of the lack of Japanese knowledge required to play them. However, it can be a case of trial and error to access certain options, or change the settings. Most options you select will require some confirmation, and the game will usually prompt you to press a certain button…



Rachel Ryan – likes playing PC Engine games, queuing in Japanese stores and teaching us how to distinguish between Save Game and Reformat Memory Card.



VIDEOGAMES SAY THE FUNNIEST THINGS…

JAPANESE TEXT

スタートボトンを押して下さい

PRONUNCIATION

SUTAATO BOTON O OSHITE KUDASAI

MEANING

Please press the Start button.

This option usually appears on title screens, in which case it's obvious what you have to do next, but it can also appear in-game when you need to select an option. The スタート (Start) text may be replaced by the relevant button to press. It's simple to work out what to do here, as the buttons will be labelled in English.

Aボトンを押して下さい *Please press the A-button.*
Bボトンを押して下さい *Please press the B-button.*

To access the Settings menu, choose the following option. The pronunciation is easy to remember, because the word used is close to the English, although in this case it's a complete coincidence!

KANJI TEXT	HIRAGANA TEXT	PRONUNCIATION	MEANING
設定	せってい	*SETTEI*	Settings

The following Japanese approximation of an English word may also be used.

KATAKANA TEXT	PRONUNCIATION	MEANING
オプション	*OPUSHON*	Option

There's a subtle difference here, because selecting the mode above may bring up hidden areas or unlockable gameplay options that will be revealed through completing the game, whereas the SET TE I mode will merely change the gameplay options. Look for the following options when changing the settings, or accessing hidden areas:

音楽	*ONGAKU (music)*
アニメ -	*ANIME (animation)*
オン/オフ	*ON/OFU (on/off)*
あり / ない	*ARI/NAI (on/off)*
ボーナスゲーム	*BOUNASU GEIMU (bonus game)*

Note, again, that the angular katakana syllabary usually means that the word is taken straight from the English.

Most arcade ports will have two ways of playing through the game:

アーケードモード *AAKEIDO MOODO (Arcade mode)*
ストーリモード *SUTOORI MOODO (Story mode)*

As in western releases, Arcade mode will be the same as the arcade release, and Story mode will be a slightly different version for the home release, with lots of inspiring stuff about dead family members, honourable revenge and burning with justice shoehorned in.

Here's how to change the difficulty settings. These same Japanese words are used in most action games which have this option. We've also given the hiragana-only spellings, because many Nintendo games use this simpler Japanese syllabary. However, just to mess with your head, the Chinese-style kanjis are as common.

KANJI TEXT	HIRAGANA TEXT	PRONUNCIATION	MEANING
簡単	かんたん	*KANTAN*	Easy
普通	ふつう	*FUTSUU*	Average
難しい	むずかしい	*MUZUKASHII*	Difficult

Here are some more options for starting a new game. The following are most likely to appear when you've just got past the title screen:

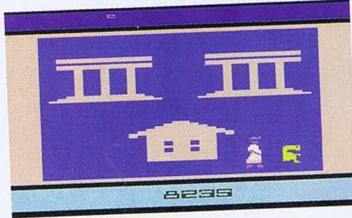
KANJI TEXT	HIRAGANA TEXT	PRONUNCIATION	MEANING
初めから	はじめから	*HAJIME KARA*	From beginning
最初から	さいしょから	*SAISHO KARA*	From beginning
続きから	つづきから	*TSUZUKI KARA*	Continue (from file)
終了	しゅうりょう	*SHUU RYOU*	Quit
記録を消す	きろくをけす	*KIROKU O KESU*	Delete file
記録を写す	きろくをうつす	*KIROKU O UTSUSU*	Copy file

Look for combinations of the above, such as 記録から始める (Start from file) but the above options are the most common.

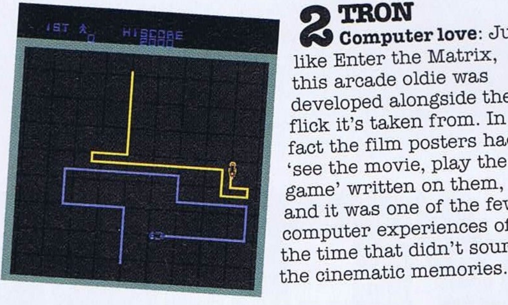
Always be sure you know what you're doing when deleting a file! Most games will give you the はい／いいえ (Yes/No) option twice at this point.

THE EVOLUTION OF... MOVIE GAMES

Big Hollywood licence? Let's make a platform game based on a ten-second clip from the film! Hey, at least it's cheap.

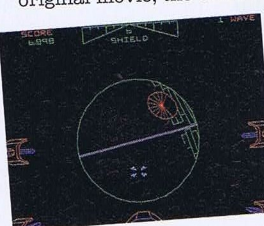


1 E.T.
Losing the plot: Steven Spielberg created an expensive, successful movie based around the exploits of a young boy and his grotesque alien buddy. Atari turned it into a cheap, virtually unplayable flop about a yellow blob who kept falling down mine shafts.

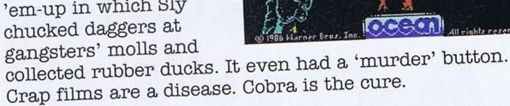


2 TRON
Computer love: Just like Enter the Matrix, this arcade oldie was developed alongside the flick it's taken from. In fact the film posters had 'see the movie, play the game' written on them, and it was one of the few computer experiences of the time that didn't sour the cinematic memories.

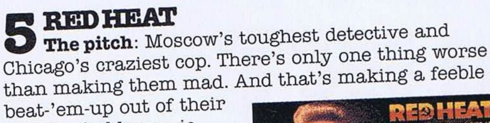
3 STAR WARS
The template: Arriving a full five years after the original movie, the classic arcade game's template of space combat, strafing the Death Star and the final trench run, has been the standard format of most Star Wars games since. Most of Rogue Leader wouldn't exist if it wasn't for this one. Who needs innovation when you've got history?



4 COBRA
Muscle brain: Unimpressed by Stallone's movie dud, the game's author turned out a superbly comical platform beat-'em-up in which Sly chucked daggers at gangsters' molls and collected rubber ducks. It even had a 'murder' button. Crap films are a disease. Cobra is the cure.

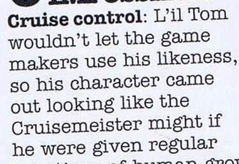


5 RED HEAT
The pitch: Moscow's toughest detective and Chicago's craziest cop. There's only one thing worse than making them mad. And that's making a feeble beat-'em-up out of their equally feeble movie. Still, at least it wasn't yet another movie-based Mario clone, with a big-headed Arnie and a troupe of dancing Soviet Goombas.

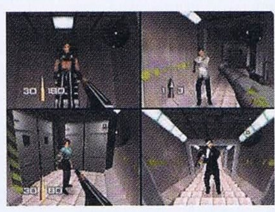




6 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE
Cruise control: L'il Tom wouldn't let the game makers use his likeness, so his character came out looking like the Cruisemeister might if he were given regular injections of human growth hormone directly into his face bones. The game itself wasn't a pretty sight either.



7 GOLDENEYE
Licensed to thrill: The only videogame that's actually better than the movie that spawned it. We'd back GoldenEye to take every other 007 game into a darkened boudoir and subject them all to a knee-trembling demonstration of Bondage. One after the other, or all at once.



8 THE MATRIX
It's the future: Instead of making a dodgy beat-'em-up or a rough old driving game based on a film, the next wave of big movie tie-ins will be side-stories featuring lesser characters. Doesn't dilute the brand quite so badly if it turns out to be a duffer, you see. Unless you're LucasArts, that is.

MORE MOVIES THAT WOULD MAKE TRULY AWFUL GAMES

1. **MAGNOLIA** Overblown, angst-ridden RPG with a bloated sense of self-importance. From the makers of *Final Fantasy*.
2. **STEEL MAGNOLIAS** Like *Magnolia*, only with a climatic gun battle between Julia Roberts and Dolly Parton.
3. **MY LEFT FOOT** *Mario Paint* clone with all the controls randomly reversed. Takes around 30 years to learn to play.
4. **MARIO BROS** The game of the film of the game. Features digitised Bob Hoskins facing off against Dennis Hopper's Bowser.
5. **8 MILE** Comes with a voice recognition add-on, into which you rap newly sanitised lyrics for middle-class white kids.
6. **DRIVING MISS DAISY** *Crazy Taxi*, except the fares are all old ladies who wet the seats if you drive over 10mph.
7. **A FEW GOOD MEN** Two-player text-'em-up. Press buttons to display 'the truth' and see who can handle it.
8. **A CRY IN THE DARK** You play a dingo who has to sneak into houses to abduct babies. Stealth! Intrigue!
9. **THE SECRET OF MY SUCCESS** From the post room to the board room. Feelgood fun with Michael J Fox and pals.
10. **TOP GUN** A movie licence that doesn't include the rights to any part of the film except the logo. It could never happen.



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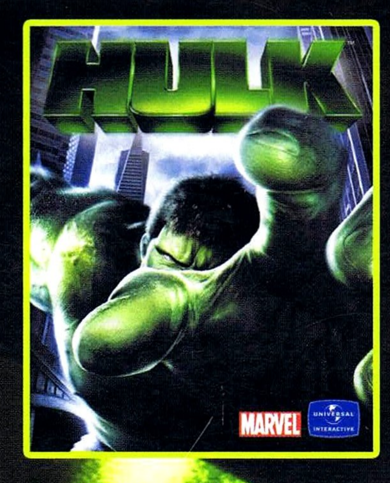
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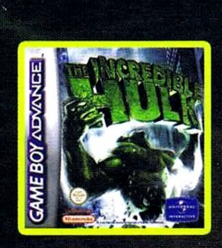
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